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ABSTRACT

This document consists of a set of seven issues of a bimonthly newsletter that focuses on home schooling, providing parents in the United States and other nations with ideas, activities, research, and resources to teach their children at home. Each issue contains short news items and reports on home schooling, letters from parents, letters on the challenges and concerns of home schooling, a focus topic, book and resource reviews, and a resource and information list. Feature reports and letters from parents include the following: (1) "Homeschoolers in College"; (2) "Watching Children Learn"; (3) "When Kids Ask To Homeschool"; (4) "Russian Homeschoolers"; (5) "Teens Out in the World"; (6) "Competition & Cooperation"; (7) "The Problem of Mandatory Continuing Education"; (8) "Difficult Times"; (9) "Alternatives to College"; (10) "Japanese School Refusers"; (11) "Handling Anxiety"; (12) "Creating Useful Schedules"; (13) "Homeschooling in Australia"; (14) "Grown-Up Homeschoolers with Children"; (15) "Families Making Music"; and (16) "The Trouble with Rewards." (AP)

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Growing Without Schooling 96

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Vallie Raymond is among those who write for this issue's Focus, "When a Subject is Difficult," p. 14-16.

Inside this Issue:

News & Reports p. 2

Advocating for Kids in School p. 3

A Homeschooler Goes to School — for a Day p. 4-5

Apprenticeship in Belize p. 6-7

Homeschoolers in College p. 8-9

Young Homeschoolers p. 10-11

Announcements & Requests p. 11

Watching Children Learn p. 12-13
Marine Biology, Electronics, Older Reader, Museum & Library Volunteer, Computers

FOCUS: When a Subject is Difficult p. 14-16

Book Reviews p. 17-20

1994 Directory of Families & Organizations p. 21-38

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Parents often ask us what they should do when their child finds a particular academic subject difficult or uninteresting or perhaps just hasn't gotten around to pursuing it yet. Should they just stay out of the way and not push the child to do it? Should they try to find creative ways of introducing the subject or working on it together? Should they try to find someone else, outside the family, to work with their child? Should they wait until the child says, "I'm ready to deal with this now," and asks for help?

The answer, probably, is all of the above. When, for this issue's Focus, we asked several young people to tell us what they wanted their parents to do in such situations, they mentioned all of these options, sometimes saying that different ones had worked for them at different times. This kind of answer can be just as frustrating to parents as the math or writing or geography is to their kids. It would be easier for adults if we could simply know, without a doubt, what to do in every situation. But the more I work with young people the more I feel that trying to be a helpful adult means hovering, constantly, in the balance between too much and not enough. I *still* worry whether I should have said something when I didn't, or whether the suggestion I made was too intrusive. I still wonder about whether the help I offer will be welcomed, or resented, or not the right kind, or too late.

One thing I do feel sure of, though, is that kids and adults *can* work this kind of thing out, if a few essential elements are in place: if the kids know that they can say no when they need to, if the adults are willing to try something different when the old way didn't work, and, most important, if the kids have a chance to develop, in their own minds, a genuine desire to work on the difficult or frustrating thing. Many of the writers in this issue talk about needing help or reminders or encouragement. They are not, contrary to a misconception about self-directed learning, working all by themselves in a vacuum. And they speak as often about truly wanting to get better at whatever it is they find difficult or distasteful. That's *why* they want help.

This discussion, like so many discussions in GWS, comes back to the distinction between helping kids achieve their own goals and trying to make them achieve someone else's goal. Vallie Raymond writes that she often needs her mother to tell her to do math before she goes out with her friends. But Vallie explains that by the time that happens, "I've already confirmed, with myself, what I have to do." That's the point — because Vallie has already confirmed it with herself, her mother's insistence works. It comes across as helpful rather than irritating because Vallie really knows that she wants that kind of reminder from her mother. The balance, the sense of what it is appropriate for an adult to do, is still difficult to maintain, but with these distinctions clear in our minds, things get a lot easier.

— Susannah Sheffer

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Office News & Announcements

News & Reports

[SS:] This fall we've taken advantage of our larger office space by holding seminars on one Saturday morning a month. The seminars were (or will be): Introduction to Homeschooling, The Journey from School to Homeschooling, Learning Without a Curriculum, and Adapting to Students' Changing Needs. We plan to repeat the introductory seminar on January 15, 1994, and we're considering other topics for later in the season.

In mid-October I went to Columbus, Ohio to be part of a panel at the Association of Science-Technology Centers annual conference. The panel was about why museums should take care to be different from schools, and I spoke about what is lost if museums or museum programs become too much like schools. It was fun to speak to a new audience full of many allies and interested people.

As you can see, this issue of GWS contains our 1994 Directory, and what a big Directory it is, with the most names we've ever had. Remember that if a person's name in GWS is followed by their state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory. If the person's name is followed by the state name written out in full, the person is *not* in the Directory, and we will forward letters if you include a stamped envelope.

Thanks to all the people who wrote to answer Daphne Slocombe's question about how parents arrange their lives in order to be able to homeschool. We're saving those letters for the next issue, so look for them there.

When your next issue, #97, arrives in the mail, you'll see that we will have made some major changes in the design of the magazine – for example, the type will be bigger, and we will have a larger photo on the cover, with no text except headlines. We'll be increasing to 40 pages instead of the usual 32, at no further cost to our subscribers, so the amount of material in each issue will remain about the same as it is now. We know that when a familiar magazine arrives looking very different, readers sometimes wonder whether the change signifies a change in philosophy or attitude. Is the magazine selling out? no longer as concerned with its long-time readers? no longer committed to the same goals? That's why we're letting you know, ahead of time, that what we're changing is the design, not our philosophy or attitude or deep respect for you, our regular readers and writers. We do indeed hope that the new design will attract more newcomers to the magazine, as well as making it easier for our regular readers to enjoy the material, but we don't want you to think that we're changing the informal, reader-based style of the magazine or the underlying philosophy about children and learning that you have always associated with us. We're not! So don't worry about that, but please do let us know what you think of the new design, and if you like it, do tell others about it. Thanks from all of us.

Report to District

[SS:] In our last issue we printed excerpts from the proposal that Phoebe Wells and Tadek Gaj (MA) sent to their school district before their son Eoin's first year of homeschooling (in the eyes of the law). A couple of readers have asked whether all such written plans have to be as lengthy or detailed. The answer is no, they don't; in states that require written proposals in the first place (and not all do), the actual wording of the law, the requirements or preferences of the particular school district, and the inclinations of the family itself will all influence what kind of proposal the family actually writes. Some people believe it's better to write a great deal so that the files are thick and the family appears thorough; others believe it's better to give only the minimum required by law and to let the school officials ask for more if they want more. Both approaches are valid. Some families see the fact that they must write a proposal as an opportunity to articulate their own philosophy and goals for the year *for themselves* as well as for the district; others view the proposal only as something they must do to satisfy legal requirements and would rather keep it as short as possible. Again, both approaches are valid. If we print excerpts from a lengthy, detailed proposal, it's often as much because the content is interesting to readers just as a description of what a family does or how a child learns as it is because we want readers to see what a sample proposal looks like. But again, to be absolutely clear: depending on the state and the district, short proposals can work quite well, too. Here's a sample of an effective, shorter proposal that Jane Dwinell (VT) wrote for her daughter Dana's first year of homeschooling (again, in the legal sense):

Course of Study for Dana Dwinell-Yardley:

1. Basic Communication Skills – Language Arts

Topics may include but shall not be limited to the following: Silent and oral reading; listening skills; telling stories; spelling; homonyms; synonyms and antonyms; writing letters, stories, and poems by hand, dictation, or typing; dictionary use for meaning and spelling; encyclopedia use; library skills, use of basic punctuation; use of table of contents and index; and computer skills.

Basic Communication Skills – Math

Topics may include but shall not be limited to the following: Count and write by 1s, 10s, 100s, 1000s; addition and subtraction with single and double digits; telling time and using the calendar; value of coins and making change; and meaning of inch, foot, yard.

2. Citizenship, History, and Government in Vermont and the U.S.

Topics may include but shall not be limited to the following: Current events; Town Meeting; travel throughout New England and to Florida; national holidays; map reading; World – name and find oceans, continents, our country, our state; U.S. – name and find New England states; VT – find Irasburg, Montpelier, Burlington, Newport, Lake Memphremagog, Lake Champlain, Lake Willoughby, Lake Morey, Connecticut River, Black River, Barton River.

3. Physical Education and Comprehensive Health Education

Topics may include but shall not be limited to the following:

Sports – cross country skiing, downhill skiing, sliding, biking, hiking, tree climbing, swimming, gymnastics, badminton, croquet, canoeing. Health Education – basic first aid for cuts, splinters, burns, sprains and strains; treatment of common cold; care of teeth and regular dental visits; traffic safety; family meal planning and food preparation.

4. English, American, and Other Literature

Topics may include but shall not be limited to the following: Novels by 19th and 20th century British and American authors; American poetry; Greek mythology.

5. The Natural Sciences

Topics may include but shall not be limited to the following: Seeds, bulbs, plants and flowers; common birds; sun, moon, stars and basic constellations; seasons, weather, clouds; fire and temperature; farm animals – care from infancy to adulthood, slaughtering; maple sugaring.

6. The Fine Arts

Topics may include but shall not be limited to the following: Drawing; painting; computer graphics; making clothes and handkerchiefs for dolls and dress-up; attending concerts and plays; listening to music at home (live and taped); singing.

Calendar

February 26, 1994: Delaware Home Education Association conference at St. Marks High School off Kirkwood Highway, Wilmington, DE. Keynote speaker Gayle Graham, author of *How to Homeschool*; workshops, vendors. For info: Jennifer Lyman, 136 Netherlands Dr, Middletown DE 19709-9677; 302-836-4941.

February 25 & 26: Pat Farenga will conduct workshops about homeschooling and the library in Wellston and Zanesville, Ohio. For info: Gail Zachariah, 614-384-2103.

Advocating for Kids in School

Alison McKee (WI) writes:

I am a teacher of the visually impaired. My students are all in mainstream classes, and they come to me for instruction in Braille and other "special skills." Sometimes they come to me when a lesson needs adaptation so that they can do it. Much of my work is adapting classroom teachers' lessons so that these kids can do them, advocating for the kids and trying to educate classroom teachers about the special educational needs of low-vision and blind kids.

My work with the children is pretty much one-on-one. My work as a vision teacher is much like my homeschooling work: not many people understand what a vision teacher does, which, in turn, frees me to do things as I deem they should be done. (The other day my principal told me he was glad one of my students had gone to the state school for the visually impaired because "they will be able to teach him sign language there." This comment comes from a man who has seven visually impaired students attending school under his roof! I almost laughed but it was too sad a comment on his understanding of my work: none.)

When I came into vision work I stumbled around for a while trying to find my niche and get my feet on the ground. Nobody could tell me what it was I was to do. Aside from the need to teach basic skills like Braille, typing/keyboarding, tape reading skills, and computer, I was on my own to develop programs for my students. As I tried to discern just what it was I should be doing and how best to go about teaching skills that were important to my students, I found the answer sitting in front of me. The answer lay within each student. If I could find ways to listen with empathy, I could teach anything.

My students do need to learn particular skills, and yet how to teach those skills comes directly from the students. I try to teach in a manner which they seem to dictate. The best example of this is my seventh grade student, a girl who is much like my own daughter.

Jasmine is the most difficult of my students to work with because she knows so well what she wants to do. She sees, so clearly, the stupidity of school. I am willing to confirm her observations and try to work from there. I do what I can to change the system to better fit her needs.

Jasmine has been removed from classes (like art) where an adult has had to sit with her and show her what to do each step of the way. Her need to be with her peers is paramount, yet it is thwarted each time an adult needs to sit with her and help her with the lesson. I have found it best for Jasmine to be out of these classes and doing things that have more meaning for her. Weeks of sitting in art class with an assistant next to her only isolates her from her peers and reinforces her sense of being different and unable. Jasmine desperately wants to be free of having to depend on adults so that she can attempt to make it on her own, even if that means failing. Since any child deserves this chance, I try to provide it for her by removing classes from her schedule which, in essence, cause her to be more dependent than she would otherwise be.

This is a simple example of how I go to bat for the children, and yet I was surprised to hear teachers' reactions to my notions of getting Jasmine removed from unnecessary classes. No teacher had ever considered the possibility of removing a child from a class that was of no use to her. It was as though I was speaking some foreign language or suggesting that we do the impossible. I only saw the simple side, the homeschooling side, if you will: when things don't work, change them. When I found myself up against those who did not understand Jasmine's need for a suitable schedule, I would pull out excuses like, "She needs more time to learn skills specifically related to the needs of a blind child," and everyone would nod approval. I was astounded to find that so many people had no notion of making education meaningful to the child. I was sure that if I had tried to remove a sighted child from an art class because the child hated art, I would not have been as successful. I would not have been able to make a case for the child because no one understands the concept of individual differences.

No teacher had ever considered the possibility of removing a child from a class that was of no use to her.

I am not always able to remove children from useless classes. Sometimes the best I can do is provide them with the skills needed to survive in such classes. Jasmine is the student who is least compliant when she sees the futility of it all. Her strong rebellion against the system frustrates everyone (even me at times) and puts me in the position of having to think of ways to create a win-win environment for both Jasmine and the "regular ed" teaching staff. As a result of this, I am constantly modifying "regular ed" lessons to fit Jasmine's needs.

When the teacher had the class study highway maps in order to learn to read a map and plan an intinerary for a fictional vacation, I suggested modifications in the lesson that would meet Jasmine's real-life need. I had Jasmine work with her mobility teacher (the teacher who teaches cane travel) on planning a trip across the U.S. using greyhound busses. Jasmine, as part of her mobility lesson, takes a city bus to the greyhound bus terminal, gets route information for her fictional trip and, with the assistance of a reader, plans a trip according to the actual bus timetables. This lesson becomes something that the classroom teacher recognizes as a "valuable learning tool." Jasmine gets real-life experience planning a trip that she might be able, someday, to take. In this instance everyone wins.

I have always attempted to show teachers that they can be much more flexible than they think and still teach the skills they deem important. Many teachers cannot understand that the teaching of concepts is the important issue. I work with them to help them understand that whether a child learns to plan a trip on a print map or by using bus timetables should not make any difference. I try to stress the notion that they should free themselves to think in terms of their final goals, not the means by which the child reaches those goals. I believe that this is one of the significant differences between the unschooling approach to learning and the traditional approach to learning.

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A Homeschooler Goes to School — for a Day!

Saraboth Matilsky (NJ) writes:

I've been homeschooled all my life, and a few months ago I got fed up with people asking me so many stupid questions about homeschooling. I felt like I should go around wearing a sign that read: "No, I do not feel like I'm missing out by not going to school. Yes, I have plenty of friends. Yes, homeschoolers *can* get into college and get jobs."

The list goes on forever. But I also knew that since I had never been to school, I couldn't really answer questions like, "Are you up to grade level? How do you *know* you wouldn't like school?" So I talked it over with Mom and Dad, and they made arrangements with the local high school for me to spend a day in eighth grade. If it turned out that I enjoyed it I might be able to sign up for one class a year.

At this point, I started to get nervous. What would I wear? Would the kids tease me? Would I be different? So I put a lot of thought into what I would bring, what I would wear, what I would eat. (I might mention that this was not entirely my own paranoia – before I went, people told me that it was very important to "fit in.")

To decide what to wear, I went with my friend Jesse to the high school when school was letting out, to see what kids wear. I finally decided on one of Jesse's shirts and blue shorts.

As for food, I know what most people eat. The problem is, I try not to eat it! The first thing that occurred to me to bring was sushi. But I almost immediately vetoed that idea – too many "weird things" in it: sea vegetables, brown rice, umeboshi plums. Again, this was not my own paranoia. People have teased me when I have eaten food like sushi in public, saying that it is weird and all that kind of thing.

I eventually compromised with a cheese sandwich on whole wheat bread. I did get some strange looks, though, when I pulled out my *two* sandwiches, an apple, an orange, and juice!

The first thing I did on Monday morning was to report to the principal's office. He introduced me to Sara, who would take me to all of her classes that day. I would follow her class schedule and eat lunch when she did. She would even have to accompany me to the bathroom! Sara had an official note to show to all her teachers, telling them why I was there.

As we left the office, someone blasted the Pledge of Allegiance over the PA system. This made me very uncomfortable, although I'm not sure why.

We spent the next 20 minutes in the auditorium. It was incredibly boring, because the teacher in charge handed out written announcements describing the upcoming school dance, and then proceeded to read the announcement aloud! Why waste our time reading aloud something that we all hopefully could read ourselves? Is the implication that high school kids cannot read something so simple?

Next was Social Studies where six kids had projects due. The assignment was to report on the climate and food supply of a real or made-up country. Since they had maps and pictures to show us, the teacher directed them to form their chairs into a semi-circle and sit on the desks so we could see. After they had moved, the teacher got upset because they had dragged the desks! What else were they supposed to do? Those desks were heavy. He then lectured them, saying that behavior would be 10% of their grade and dragging desks was bad behavior.

I put a lot of thought into what I would bring, what I would wear, what I would eat. (I might mention that this was not entirely my own paranoia - before I went, people told me that it was very important to "fit in.")

I feel that this assignment taught them hardly anything. I don't understand the point – what took them 44 minutes to say out loud could have been read by the class just as easily in five minutes. It also would have saved the humiliation of the shy kids who, when they talked too softly, were reprimanded by the teacher. I don't think that reprimanding them in this way will help them become good speakers in the future. Two boys looked like they were going to cry the whole time!

Math class was next. Since the class was working on algebra (which I haven't started yet), I spent the period looking around the classroom. Most of the kids did not look like they either understood or enjoyed algebra. They were just reciting answers to questions they didn't understand, as near as I can tell. But there were two boys toward the front of the class who seemed as though they knew the answer to everything! They raised their hands for almost every question. I also noticed a boy sitting behind me who kept asking questions, trying to understand *why* the problem worked. He did not want to know simply how to get the problem done, but why he was putting a number here and taking one away there. But the teacher did not seem to know how to answer his questions. She told him how to do it but she didn't seem able to explain why.

I really enjoyed science class. This teacher (unlike most of the others) was actually respectful of the students. He asked for their opinions, and respected them. He actually skipped an entire chapter in the book because he felt it was not relevant! The kids also looked genuinely interested. The teacher did not have to lecture them on behavior and the kids gave him no reason to. Also things like asking a lot of questions didn't bother him like they did the other teachers.

Next we went to the school library for 20 minutes of free reading (or in this case free talking). I think it was a very important period, because the students could unwind from the tensions already created by the previous classes. But it would have been even better if they could have gone outside and let some energy out.

Then came lunch. Because it was only 22 minutes long, I just had time to wolf down my sandwiches and gulp my orange juice. At this point I noticed the contrast between how people eat at school and how we eat at home. Now, I hasten to point out that although mealtimes at home are far from perfect (the baby decides to scream through the entire meal, someone kicks someone else), we can eat whenever we want – no fixed schedule. We also have a chance to finish – no time limits. We can take our food outside on nice days, which brings me to another point – the cafeteria. It's not that it was dark or small, but I would much rather eat on the front lawn. It was very noisy (and I'm used to noise!) and crowded. Altogether, I'm glad I didn't get indigestion.

People have often remarked to Mom and Dad, "But school prepares them for the real world. They have to learn that ____." In this case it's eating lunch in 22 minutes. This particular statement is untrue. At the worst job Mom ever had (at a factory), lunch break was half an hour. Then there are coffee breaks. There is also the food you eat at your desk whenever you want.

After lunch I felt the need to urinate. For me to go to the bathroom, Sara first had to go to the teacher of her next class (Spanish) to tell her that she would be 30 seconds late, and then go halfway back to the cafeteria where the bathrooms were. When I questioned this, Sara said, "If we're late to class, I am the one who will get detention, not you!"

I felt that the whole situation was degrading. At work, do you have to ask to perform necessary bodily functions? When I work at the food co-op, for example, I don't ask the manager's permission to go to the bathroom!

Spanish class was bedlam. The students were rehearsing for a play in Spanish which they were putting on the next day. They were trying to do the impossible, in my opinion. In 44 minutes they were trying to learn lines (in a language they didn't really understand), decide on props, scenery, and costumes. Plus, since they had not used the stage yet, no one had any idea of where they were going to move once they did use it. The teacher assured everybody that it would all "come together" the next day.

It was clear that nobody really wanted to do it (including the teacher), and after a while the kids started talking about other things. The only thing the teacher said for most of the class was, "Be quiet!" Of course nobody listened.

One interesting point, though. In Social Studies the teacher *told* the kids to sit on the desks, but when some kids sat on the desks in Spanish class, the teacher said it would break them. I guess that at the beginning of the year the savvy kids figure out what each teacher likes and dislikes, and if they pay attention to that, by the end of the year they can get a good grade.

We went upstairs for English, and the teacher read the class two satires. I love having people read aloud to me, but I don't think I would have chosen those particular stories. I did not really mind them, but they were the kind of books my 7-year-old sister enjoys. Most of the kids looked bored, some were whispering, and the boy next to me was rolling his eyes and pushing his chair back. By the end of the class he must have pushed it back three feet!

Then came gym. It was awful! It started out by Sara handing the teacher her note. He didn't read it, and said, "Shut up and sit down!" Then he made us, for no apparent reason, sit cross-legged, three abreast, on the floor, and when he had finally bullied everyone into sitting in a line, he said, "Get outside!"

The first thing he did, once outside, was to say to a girl who was not wearing the right shoes, "Oh, not dressed right? Well, you're going to fail again!"

Then the other teacher said, "Everyone for softball over here, kickball over there, pronto!" As soon as the kickball game had started, I wished it was over. Any boy who missed the ball was called a "girl" by his so-called friends. One boy missed the ball, and his "friend" came over to him and said, "You're a has-been, you're a never-was!"

Then the teacher yelled at a boy who looked like he was about to cry, and it was my turn to be yelled at. The teacher came up to me and said, "Why aren't you playing?"

It was the end of the year and he didn't even know his own students! I told him I was visiting, but he didn't believe me until he called Sara over to interrogate her (she had given the note to the other teacher). He still was not friendly, until he found out I was homeschooled, whereupon he began oohing and aahing about homeschooling. It was very strange.

Finally gym class was over, but there were still three minutes left in the period so we had to sit down inside until the bell rang. When I got outside, I breathed in the fresh air. It was nice to be free again!

Spending the day in school did answer many questions I had had. I have always wondered how school was really run. Many of my friends came back with varied reports, but nothing that would answer many of my questions. And besides, seeing is believing! Also, in a way, the day made me feel like I *could* go to school, if I needed to. I mean that I think I would be capable of doing the work.

It also definitely made me even more firm in my choice to homeschool. For one thing, there's so much to absorb in one day in school. With homeschooling, I can just do math one day, geography the next, or just go to a friend's house. Also, in school, you might just be getting into a subject when – brrring – the bell ends the period and you're onto a totally new subject.

One thing that also struck me was the amount of *sitting* in a day at school. Just sitting, with the only exercise being walking from class to class. Being homeschooled makes it much easier to learn because you can get up, move around, touch things, and the whole process is hands-on.

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Apprenticeship in Belize

Do you know anyone who still thinks homeschoolers are so sheltered and protected that they're not comfortable in the wider world? Emily Ostberg's story, below, about working with medicinal plants in Belize, Central America, should give these critics something to think about. Meanwhile, I want to say something about how Emily arranged this opportunity for herself, because I think it's important for others to see that these things take work to arrange and at the same time that they are very possible.

Last winter, when Emily was 17, she told me that she was interested in doing some kind of botanical work in Asia or Central America. She had already spent a month in Nepal, visiting family friends, and had loved that adventure. She had also studied for a while, though not very extensively, with a university botany student. Emily asked me for help in researching possible opportunities and making some of the necessary phone calls.

I knew almost nothing about this field, but I had heard of the Rainforest Action Network in San Francisco, so I began by calling them. They had no information about volunteer opportunities in the rainforest itself, although they would have been happy to have volunteers in their office. Next I thought of Cultural Survival, an organization here in Cambridge that is dedicated to the survival of indigenous populations. I called and learned that they had a data base of organizations looking for volunteers, so Emily and I visited them and she went through the computer files, copying down organizations that looked interesting. She later wrote letters to several of them, and received a couple of interesting responses, including one that she considered pursuing. Meanwhile, I asked Donna Richoux's husband, Frank Ross, if there was anyone he could suggest calling at Harvard (Frank worked at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology before moving to the Netherlands), and he told me about the Harvard Herbaria. After speaking with several different people on the phone, I finally reached a graduate student who was willing to talk to us about the work that students and researchers were doing out in the field. Emily and I met with him and learned that there were a lot of fairly tedious jobs with which a researcher might appreciate help. The difficulty was that most of this year's projects had been set up long before, and Emily was interested to begin this work in a few months (that summer or fall). Still, it was interesting for Emily to get a sense of what sorts of people were doing what sort of work. In the process of seeking out an apprenticeship or internship, very few letters or phone calls are wasted, I find, precisely because they help the young person understand who is doing what and to gain a clearer sense of where he or she might fit in.

At around this time, Emily saw an article in the Whole Earth Review *about Ix Chel Farm in Belize. She wrote to the magazine asking for the address of the Farm, and then wrote to the Farm itself saying that she was very interested in working there as a volunteer. She said she had little or no experience in this area but she was willing to work hard and was interested in botany, biology, and horticulture. She received a fairly quick response telling her that she was welcome to come and giving her some idea of what she might be able to do. After Emily and her family did some further investigating about Ix Chel and about what working there would be like, Emily made plans to go there in early July. What follows are excerpts from letters she has been sending to family and friends. — Susannah Sheffer*

July 12, 1993

I'm looking out the door of my wooden house, sheltered from the rain by a thatched roof of neatly arranged palm branches. There are two hummingbirds feeding in a nearby red hibiscus and to the left are a bunch of banana trees with a big bunch of green bananas. I can see two other buildings from here, a bedroom/office building and an oval kitchen/living/dining house. This little patch of cultivated land on 35 acres of rainforest is called Ix Chel Farm. It's near the town of San Ignacio, two hours down the straight "western highway" from Belize City. Belize City is on the flat coast and is very Caribbean. San Ignacio is in the hills and is much more like most of Central America. Ix Chel is on the bank of a swollen yellow river and consists of about twelve little buildings, a trail of medicinal plants, and lots of greenery watched over by a tall radio antenna. The electricity is solar-powered, the water is from rain, food is from the garden, and the bathrooms are latrines.

Here at Ix Chel there is a short trail through the rainforest full of naturally occurring medicinal trees which the tourists guide themselves through. Ix Chel also works to find new medicines by sending samples to the New York Botanical Garden for positive identification and then to the National Cancer Institute for testing. Twelve plants so far have shown promise in treating cancer and AIDS. Ix Chel makes and sells rainforest remedies. We make them right here from tinctures of plants and alcohol with very simple equipment. The jungle salve and the traveler's tonic sell the best because jungle salve treats bug bites and poison ivy and traveler's tonic prevents malaria and helps get rid of tummy bugs.

I'm getting tan and I'm very, very happy to be here!

Emily

July 31, 1993

I can't believe I've been here a month already. It seems like forever. A lot has happened since I last wrote. I've been down the river, eaten four ice creams in one night, been out to dinner a couple of times, been to Guatemala, been to one nice party, and been bitten up by mosquitos in the

forest. I've learned how to smile at all the tourists, how to calculate the height of trees, how to eat fresh coconut, how to smush scorpions in one blow, and how to keep account books. All kinds of fun!

Rosita Arvigo, the founder of this farm, got back from the states on the 19th. After two weeks of talking about her, I was very glad to meet her in person. She is a very interesting woman with a very interesting life story. She is tall and dark-haired with a gypsy nose and a nice smile. She is extremely knowledgeable, lively, and precise. You have to wash dishes her way, and you *do*. She is a very nice boss and we work well together. The word at Ix Chel is that "Emily is working out well."

Also returning from vacation the same week was Jay the plant man. He is a very likable 21-year-old from La Jolla, California. He is down here collecting plants for the New York Botanical Garden. When I'm not busy I help him press plants, fill in data, do calculations, weigh bark. I'm learning a lot about botany just by hanging around and helping out.

I'm learning Spanish little by little by listening, using a dictionary, and keeping a list of words in my sketchbook. The words are listed under different subjects such as food, places, verbs, and feelings. Under "Places" I have such important words as "La Via Lactea" (the milky way) and "El Rio" (the river).

The stars, by the way, are magnificent here and so is the moon. Last night at 8:30 Jay and I decided we wanted some allspice tea. There is an allspice tree not too far away in the forest, so we decided to be brave and go into the jungle to get some leaves. The forest at night is a very spooky place. The moonlight made weird patterns on the ground and the insects sang loudly all around. It was definitely not the kind of thing one would do alone! Jay kept saying things like, "Now remember, Emily, never run in the jungle! Never! Even if a jaguar sneaks up behind you!" It's true, you shouldn't, but ... anyway, we survived and the tea was wonderful.

Emily

August 23, 1993

We were supposed to be on expedition all last week collecting plants for the National Cancer Institute and the New York Botanical Garden at a place called Terra Nova. It's a wild piece of land but it's beautiful, beautiful rainforest. The first day we tried to go there we had to turn around at a flooded creek, but finally the sun came out and I started my first scientific expedition. But first, lunch! We ate tofu and tuna sandwiches in a stick-and-thatch house on a ranch on the edge of the jungle. Rancho Mirasole consists of three families and a few acres of maize, growing happily where the jungle once was. What a life those people have! It's hard to blame such brave, hardworking people for destroying the forest.

The first afternoon of collecting plants was terrible. It takes lots of strong men to do the actual cutting and hackings so my jobs were easy: taking pictures, stuffing bags, stripping leaves off branches. It was too hot for long pants. Greg (Rosita's husband) was cross, I did everything wrong, the camera (my camera!) broke, we ran out of bags. Back in Spanish Lookout, it took a whole bag of M & M's and a good laugh to restore my sense of humor. Spanish Lookout looks for all the world like Kansas, transplanted by magic to Central America. Only the palm trees give it away. Very strange!

Next day, after a long sleep, we went out again. This time I was in heaven. We got 18 bags before lunch and then drove further in to see Jay's plot and an unexciting Maya ruin. On the way out we got stuck in two feet of black cement-like mud. "Forget it," everyone said. "Let's eat first!" So we did - handmade, hand-ground tortillas and bean soup. Then "the men" dug us out while Rosita and I shared a hammock and talked to the women of Misarole. For once I didn't mind how sexist Latin America is!

Emily

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Homeschoolers in College

At Wellesley

From Bronwyn Jackson, formerly of Florida:

I am a Sophomore at Wellesley College. I started to write and call colleges in what would have been my sophomore year in high school. In the beginning of my senior year I decided to apply to three women's colleges: Converse, Hollins, and Wellesley. I was admitted to all three. All of these schools were interested in homeschooling. Hollins and Converse didn't know much about homeschoolers but Wellesley had had several apply each year for a while and knew what to expect.

Aside from the usual applications, I sent lists of books that I had read, my music repertoire, poetry I had memorized, books that I had written over the past four years, activities that I had participated in that I would not have been able to had I gone to regular school (a stained glass apprenticeship, an archaelogical dig, the Florida State University bands and orchestras, etc.), a tape of me playing the harp, and pictures of the quilts I had made. In addition to regular essays I submitted articles I had written for a high school newspaper and GWS about homeschoolers and what being a homeschooler meant to me. My harp teacher, professors at FSU, and my high school physics teacher (I took a class at the high school) wrote letters of recommendation. The Wellesley admissions department says that these kinds of letters are very important for homeschoolers because they help the admissions board decide if the student will be able to do well at the college.

Hollins and Converse both said that I needed to take a lab science before coming to their schools, so I took physics at a high school in Tallahassee. Wellesley, too, suggested that I take a science class, but also said that if I wanted just to homeschool my senior year, it was OK with them. A homeschooler applying to a college should find out what that school's policies are regarding credits, GEDs, and diplomas. No Ivy League school requires a diploma. Less prestigious schools, especially community colleges and state schools, since they have to follow state guidelines, tend to get caught up in unproductive rules. These requirements are even worse for students applying for financial aid. Hollins said that I would have to take the GED to get financial aid, but the story changed when I told them that in order to do that, I would have to drop the high school science class they wanted me to take!

I don't think adjusting to college is very different for most homeschoolers than for students who attended traditional school. For the first time I am around students who are almost all interested in learning and are interested in different lifestyles instead of being frightened by them. Before coming to Wellesley I was afraid that the other students would be able to tell that I was different from them, because I homeschooled. Many students do have a stronger academic background and are much better at taking tests, since they went to small, expensive private schools in the north. However, professors here expect a lot of independent work, which I am good at because I taught myself for nine years.

When I mention homeschooling to someone new, she often seems surprised and interested, not threatened (which was the typical reaction of the students at home). There are even students here who know other families who homeschool, and many women here say they plan to educate their children at home. No one asks if I had social problems. It is fantastic being able to choose my friends from these women.

It is also nice being just a regular student instead of having to fight to take classes, join clubs, or use the school library as I did when I was a homeschooler. Last year I took a senior level seminar, was a member of five clubs, and performed with three music groups and with the dance company at Wellesley. This semester I'm vice-president of Wellesley Women for Choice, treasurer of the Classics Club, and taking five classes - proof that not all homeschoolers are underdeveloped socially and unprepared to live in the "real world."

I also love being at a women's college. I had taken an advanced Latin class at the high school, and was called on *one time* in the entire year to translate in class. The teacher called on the three white boys in the class almost every day. Once when reading in the FSU library this summer, I realized that several men were looking at me, not because I was particularly well-dressed, but because I was female and just there. These things don't happen to women at Wellesley.

This year, even more than last year, I do miss being able to learn at my own rate rather than at the teacher's. This semester, in addition to my regular courses, I am working on an independent study with a professor in the music department. This class is just like homeschooling. We work at my own rate. When I am ready to move on to something new, we move on. If I have trouble understanding something, we work on it until I understand.

I think homeschooling prepared me for Wellesley better than any other means of education in Tallahassee could have, and, in some ways, better than a private school in the north.

At Boston College

From Sarah Pitts, formerly of Georgia:

I applied to five colleges, and Boston College was my first choice. Boston College requires a transcript and two essays. The application focused heavily on activities, and in one section you had to write what activities you were involved in and any awards or honors you had won. Since I'm homeschooled I couldn't list activities like president of the French Club or member of the Honor Society. Instead I listed things like my involvement in community theatre and the leadership positions I've held there, and my involvement in 4-H. Also, I was in charge of registrations for our state homeschool conference, and I listed that to show that I had organizational skills. Finally, I listed the jobs I had had, including my internship with a bookseller, doing shipping and receiving.

We didn't send in any kind of transcript. The other schools called and asked about it, and when we said we didn't have one, they said we should just write an outline of what I had covered, listing books I'd used and whatever else would give an idea of what I had done. I had taken the ACT, as well as the SAT and the achievement tests, and one advantage of the ACT is that the registration form asks you how many years you've studied various subjects, and then that information gets forwarded to the colleges, so that was one way for them to find out what I had done. BC requires that you take the SAT *or* the ACT, but I figured in my case, the more test scores they had, the better, so I took both.

I don't think it would have been very hard to write up an outline of what I had done. In the end, BC was the college I most wanted to go to and the only one that didn't ask for any kind of transcript, so I didn't end up having to do anything about it.

My mother wrote the letter that is usually written by the school counselor. Obviously, when it's your own child and you want them to get into college, you're not going to write anything really bad, but she tried to be as objective as possible and to focus on the facts about what I had done, rather than the feelings. She wrote a lot about the field trips we had taken and the traveling we had done.

Georgia requires homeschoolers to take tests every three years, although the state is not required to see the scores. We had had a private tutor administer the tests, so when I was applying to college, we asked her to go back and look over the results and write a summary of how I had progressed over the years.

Most applications ask for at least one teacher recommendation in addition to

the counselor letter. We were a little stumped at first, but I ended up asking my employers to write letters. I had worked for a year and a half at a computer consulting firm, and I was also working at one other job, in retail. Then, the president of the theatre group I was involved in sent a letter for me as well.

It's a good idea to plan ahead and get letters from anyone outside the family with whom you have extended contact, even when you're young. If you get involved with an activity when you're 14 and do it for a year, it may be hard to find that person years later when you're applying to college. When I was in ninth or tenth grade I worked as a counselor with my county 4-H group. At the end of the summer the counselor wrote me a letter thanking me, and we copied that and sent it to the colleges. It would have been hard to track her down later if I hadn't gotten the letter at the time.

Usually, colleges strongly suggest that you have an interview. The other schools said they would need me to come in and explain homeschooling to them. One had a homeschooler already enrolled, but they knew that each family homeschools in a different way and it's not really possible to evaluate homeschoolers as a group. In the end, though, BC didn't interview me, because they have so many applicants that it's difficult to get an interview.

I'm enjoying college so far. The last time I went to school was in eighth grade, so I obviously haven't been in this kind of setting for a while. But college is a new experience for everyone. One time I was confused about the way a test was going to be administered, and another student asked me, "Do you think you're having a problem with this because you were homeschooled?" I said that anyone would find this confusing and I didn't think it had to do with being homeschooled.

Another time, I was wanting to run for treasurer of my dorm, and you had to list the activities you'd been involved in in high school. I asked my RA what I should list because I was homeschooled and didn't have the traditional activities. She said, "What?" and people started coming out of their rooms to hear what I was saying. A crowd developed, and everyone was asking me questions.

I've actually found that this college setting is much more similar to the home setting than to high school. It's more relaxed than high school. If a teacher says something, it's easier to ask questions or to challenge it. You can say I don't believe that, or why is that true, or I don't see how that's possible. It's much more personal, and you're encouraged to go speak with your professors. I've only spoken with one professor about homeschooling, and she seems interested in it and hasn't treated me any differently because of it.

In general, my friends seem to be in awe of the fact that I was homeschooled and made it to BC. People seem to think it's not natural for people who haven't gone through traditional schooling to make something of themselves. But it can be done by anybody, and I think it's important for other homeschoolers to know that. I know the Colfaxes were very inspiring to me when I was applying to college.

Sometimes my friends here talk about high school experiences. Last night everybody was talking about the prom, and at times like that I do have to step back and think, I can't talk about this. I had friends who went to the prom, but I didn't go. On the other hand, when people talk about football games - I've been to high school football games. I'm also from a different region of the country from most people here, so it feels like there's always something you might be different about and it's not that hard to explain it. Now it's almost a joke with my friends that I haven't had some of the same experiences. They'll talk about a teacher they hated in high school, and I'll say, "I had the most wonderful teacher." Or, some people were talking about wishing they had had comfortable couches, like the ones in our lounge, in their classrooms, and I said, "I did have a comfortable couch like this!"

In some ways it was hard to leave home, because my mother had been my main support in terms of learning. But I actually miss my friends from home more than I miss my parents, because I know my parents are still there for me. I have a strong bond with my mother, and that actually made it easier for me to leave her, because I know she's still there for me.

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Young Homeschoolers

Most people start preparing their children for school long before it's actually time to attend. We asked GWS readers if they did anything to prepare their children for *not* going to school.

Thinking About Home Environment

Deborah Bydlon (AK) writes:

We have three young children – ages 4, 2, and 1 month – whom we plan on homeschooling. We do find ourselves doing things that support our decision. Both my husband and I are certified early childhood elementary school teachers (ironic?) and we both believe strongly in a child-centered environment. We have structured our home environment to be one in which the children are allowed as much free play as possible. We do not teach our children skills – we watch them develop. It is amazing what comes from within. Perhaps my hardest task is not to interrupt what my child is doing on his own.

We do, however, think about the environment and what tools our children have available to use. We try to purchase toys and other manipulatives that are very open-ended. We have purchased numerous children's books and have quite an extensive library. These books are available to the children whenever they choose and we are almost always willing to read to them. We purchased most of the books second-hand, through library book sales.

We also keep some examples and records of our children's creations and experiences, more for ourselves than for some school official, but they could also be used in that capacity if necessary. This includes early artwork, early writing, pictures of our children engaged in water play, making block creations, playing dress-up, etc. On occasion, we also document what books we have been reading, different skill areas I see being used (for example, when my son took a great interest in whales and we studied and learned about them in many different ways).

Countering School-Hype

Clare Cooper (NJ) writes:

Our children are 7, 5, and 3. We certainly did prepare the older ones for the fact that they were going to be homeschooled. We had told them for a long time before we made the actual commitment to keep them home that homeschooling was an alternative to going to school and that we were giving it serious consideration. We did not send any of them to preschool, which caused quite a stir in and of itself. Lance, the oldest, had friends who wondered why he wasn't going to preschool, and he wondered why they were going. I explained that every child's parents have to decide what they feel is best for their children.

I must also admit that we did not give the children an unbiased view of the conventional schooling process. We explained about getting up early every day, being away from the family for six and a half hours a day, competing with twenty other children for the teacher's attention, studying what the teacher has decided is the right topic for a given half hour, etc. In other words, we did not paint a very rosy picture. Maybe this was overkill, but you do need to counter much school-hype from so many people. It is amazing how many people – and how early in a child's life – will ask the usual school-related questions. So you have to give the children some retorts. Also, you will hopefully be able to pass along to them your enthusiasm for and pride in being a part of the homeschooling movement. I have noticed growing confidence in my children as time passes. When people ask them about school, they answer enthusiastically, "We're homeschoolers!"

Made Sure He Knows

Julie Scandora (WA) writes:

Since homeschooling is a continuation of life as it is otherwise lived, there are no special activities done for my son beforehand as there may be for preschoolers who will be entering school later. However, I have prepared my 5 year old in another sense. Ty will not have had the experience of school as his older sisters had for a few years, but I have made sure he knows at least in theory what he is missing. (His sisters help him imagine his "loss" through the experiences they relate as well). I remind him that at home he can do as he pleases (within bounds, of course) rather than what a teacher tells him and when a bell sounds.

I realized I was successful in this regard after a visit to the dentist when Ty was 4. The dentist and hygienist asked Ty if he went to school. "No," came his proud reply. "I go to school at home and can do whatever I want. Ha, ha, ha!" Fortunately, it came off in a lighthearted way. Also, I find adults rarely believe my children when they say they can do as they please in homeschooling. Even other children are incredulous. Obviously, such freedom is rare. So I know Ty appreciates his freedom since he understands schooled children are not allowed it.

Doing Projects Together

Carla Stein of Massachusetts writes:

We have three kids: Kenny (7), Ricky (5), and Melody (3). It has always been our intent to homeschool, so perhaps I can respond to the query in GWS #95 about what folks with "preschoolers" do with their kids.

I guess it's always been at the back of my mind that at the magic age of 6 we would be official homeschoolers, and I admit that I did do a fair amount of preparation for that eventuality. I did a lot of things that, looking back on it, may have been prompted by a desire to keep up with the moms whose brilliant offspring were being forcefed the alphabet through pre-nursery schools and TV shows. Most of those things were enthusiastically avoided after the first time we tried them. You know what I mean. *Educational* alphabet and counting games.

The things that we did because one of us thought of them, or that evolved into projects by themselves, have been much more enduring. One "preschool" project was an alphabet book that Kenny and I started when he was 3. We would spend time clipping letters from the junk mail and taping them in the right page. Kenny really liked this and would wait anxiously for the mail carrier to come with "his" mail. Before very long, a number book, punctuation book, and dried leaf book joined the alphabet book on the kitchen shelf. Right now, Melody is really enjoying them.

I've always made an effort to make sure that the toys the kids have are not TV-type toys. We don't even have a TV in the house, so the desire for these toys is nonexistent, which helps. We have lots of building sets, and lots of puzzles. We've also always had lots of art materials available.

There was a period of several weeks when all the boys wanted to do was woodworking (pounding things and pretending they were building). So off we went and got them each a real hammer, a huge box of roofing nails, and scrap lumber from a construction site. For months the house rang from morning till night with the rhythm of their hammering. Eventually we added a hand-drill and a saw (used with help) and each of them ended up building a little model house.

Of course, we've had the read-aloud habit ever since Kenny was big enough to sit still, and now we take 50 books every three weeks from the library to support

that habit. During the "preschool" period, I never attempted to teach reading because they didn't seem to want to learn. They just wanted to enjoy the books, so I let them. I have to admit I would occasionally attempt to get away with running my fingers under the words while I read, but this was vigorously opposed. All three love books and are currently in various stages of teaching themselves to read.

Making gifts has been another fun activity that just came along naturally. We've done lots of little hand-sewn projects as gifts and made special cards. Of course they'd need to write a message inside those cards. Sometimes I'd write what they dictated, or they'd say it and I'd write a sample for them to copy, or they'd ask me for dot-to-dot letters for them to trace. In this way, all three of them have learned to write before they could read.

Both boys have always liked real things better than toys, like sections of PVC pipe to put together or real bricks or nuts and bolts or wood and nails. So we have allowed them to have whatever appeals to them to work with, as long as it was safe, and we have encouraged them in their various interests. Repairing things around the house or the car was always a family affair, and I'm sure they've learned a lot from watching and helping at these times. We include them as much as we can in any building projects we are doing and try not to let them feel that they are a nuisance.

I wish I could remember all the great things we've done together as "preschoolers." That's one side benefit of going official - I have to keep records, so now I can look back at what we've done since we hit the magic "6." Now that we're official, we keep on doing all the things we did as "preschoolers," letting things drop naturally as they are outgrown and expanding into more complex stuff as the kids aspire to it. The only real difference between then and now is that now I have to write down everything we do and try to figure out what subject to credit it to afterwards.

One last thing that I have done, purposely, to prepare for a harmonious family life as homeschoolers, has been to make sure that I don't have to carry the full burden of the housework and chores. They understand that I have more to give if I don't also have to kill myself doing all the chores. So at an early age I started them doing their share of making beds, picking up their own dirty laundry, setting the table, daily pickup of the crafts area, playroom, and bedrooms, and cleaning up their own spills and other messes. It has helped a lot, and once these habits are developed it sure makes it easier to give them their freedom in other areas and to allow them to participate in large messy projects or things that require a lot of hands-on time from me.

Watch for more letters on this subject in our next issue!

Announcements & Requests

What Do Kids Think About School?

Larry Hunt, 1602 SW Heather, Grants Pass OR 97526, writes:

What Do Kids Think About School? is the title of the book I am currently writing. One of my main goals is to share the unique insights of young people who have experienced both public school education and homeschooling. I am inviting young readers of GWS to send me their own stories, examples, and experiences.

I am especially looking for specific anecdotes and examples that point out the deficiencies of public schooling. Compare and contrast your public schooling experience with what you have learned and experienced outside of school. Show how learning can be a natural part of life. Give specific examples. Let me know how you feel, but include more than just your opinion.

I am a former public school teacher who believes the time is right to extend the current debate over American educational reform to include the insights of our schools' real customers - students! I want to include contributions from kids of all ages, backgrounds, and locations. (Parents, feel free to help your little ones, or write your own stories about what you have seen in the lives of your children.)

When the book is published, everyone whose contribution has been included will be part of a unique profit-sharing and recognition program. Each person quoted in the book will receive a photocopy of his or her page(s) and a personal acknowledgment. The fifty people who get the most ink will receive a free copy of the book, and the ten individuals who are most quoted will each receive 2% of any and all royalties the book generates.

Any length article will be accepted, but quality is more imprtant than quantity. Entries become the property of the author. Names can be changed on request. Because I will be submitting the book to the publisher some time after the current school year, I need to receive your contributions by 6/1/94. Thanks for your help.

Survey of African-American Homeschoolers

Donna Nichols White of The Drinking Gourd *magazine, PO Box 2557, Redmond WA 98053, writes:*

I am developing a survey for and about African-American homeschoolers. The purpose of the survey is to find out why and how African-American families homeschool, what our differences from and similarities to other homeschooling families are, and what we have accomplished. The survey will be confidential and no identifying information will be published without your permission. If you are interested in participating, write to the above address and mark your letters "African-American Homeschool Survey."

Traveling Family from New Zealand

Libby Mitchell writes from New Zealand:

My husband and I have decided to sell our house here and learn by traveling again. We were both long-term travelers before being married and having children. So as soon as we are organized here - we hope around November - we will be off, first to North America (including Hawaii) where we will buy a camper van (possibly in California).

I would love to hear from anyone who would like to support us in any way with ideas of places to visit, where to buy a camper van, where to stay, or with hospitality. We do have the GWS Directory which we will refer to, and both girls have pen-pals from GWS whom they would like to contact. We would also like to work, but in the U.S. we would need to work on an exchange basis, as we are not permitted to earn money. But my husband and children are also Canadian citizens, and I am applying for residency, so we can have jobs there.

I look forward to meeting with other families who have children outside of the school system. Write c/o Mrs. Gaby Mitchell, 5502 Silverson St, Apt 308, Cote St Luc, P. Quebec H4V 2G5, Canada.

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Watching Children Learn

Marine Biology, *The Odyssey*

Michael Fortunato (MA) writes:

I usually like to be left alone to do work on my problems, but if I need some help, I ask my parents for hints or clues - not the answer. Other than that, I figure things out on my own. I have learned lots of things on my own. For instance, marine biology. I love to read books on sharks, rays, and fish. I watch shows and collect items such as teeth, jaws, and embryos. To collect items, I would talk to people to let them know I like sharks so if they see something that has to do with sharks, they will say, "Oh! Michael would like that!"

I am never forced to learn something that is too hard, but I do learn hard things. For example, I love *The Odyssey*. My mom gave me a kids' version, but I had listened to a story tape and I knew there were more stories in *The Odyssey*. I wanted to read the whole book, so I got the adult version out of the library. Some people might think that it was too hard, but it was easy, because I was really interested in the book.

Sometimes things just don't work out. My mom loved learning the French language. She tried everything to help me like it too. She tried movies, tapes, books, classes. It just didn't work.

Also, I had always wanted to cook. I tried to make a batch of cookies, and they turned out like charcoal. My mom showed me how to work with cups, ounces, fractions. Just to show you sometimes need a little help!

Making Simple Machines

From Lorraine Hoyt (ME):

When our children were younger we had fun making simple machines just with stuff around the house. I've thought that materials prepared to teach simple machines were less effective because the materials were all so tiny that it was hard to see the use of the machine. My son Zach got really excited to be able to lift his father using a simple lever - a long board and a fulcrum. He tried to lift cement blocks by himself. Then we used rollers and a ramp (another board) to lift the blocks. He tried ramps at different angles and used a spring scale to measure the force needed to pull his little wagon loaded with rocks up a short steep ramp or up a longer one with a slighter slope. We did the same things with pulleys. We rummaged through the kitchen drawers and tool boxes finding levers and wedges, wheels and pulleys. We looked at David Macaulay's book, *The Way Things Work*, and saw how simple machines were developed into more complex ones. Later, when we were doing a program called Science-by-Mail, there was a unit on simple machines, but the materials used were so small that the children couldn't see and feel the difference that the machines made. Going to a lock and seeing the machinery used to close the gates or watching construction seemed much more valuable and fun.

My husband teaches chemistry, and from the time they were quite young the children have enjoyed playing with the molecular models he uses. Kits for making these can be obtained through college bookstores or science supply sources. With them one can explore different compounds, the nature of chemical bonding, and such without using the chemicals themselves.

Passion for Electronics

From Carla Stein of Massachusetts:

My son Kenny developed an amazing passion for electronics when he was about 4. He's now 7 and I am quite impressed with how far we both have come (I was as ignorant as he to start with, which probably made it more fun for him, since I wasn't attempting to teach him at all). His interest started when our camera broke and he decided to take it apart to see how it worked. Once the case was opened, he was amazed to see weird little gizmos in there that he'd never seen before. He has always been a collector of spare parts and mechanical things, so he was really intrigued.

Since then we have dismantled an iron, a cordless phone, a computer terminal, a VCR, and a microwave oven. Appliance repair shops will often give you "junk" that the owners have decided against repairing. Kenny can now identify at least 75% of the parts on any circuit board you show him, draw its schematic symbol, tell you what the part does and sometimes how it's made.

We've also started doing a lot of reading in this area. We started out with a few simple books on electricity. I remember one called *Magnet to Generator* by Fagan as being particularly good. It has a lot of little projects like lighting up bulbs, making an electromagnet, making switches, homemade batteries, etc. Right now we're reading *Getting Started in Electronics* by Mims. It's a high school-level Radio Shack book, and we're having a ball with it. Kenny is not really interested in learning to read right now, so I'm reading all this stuff out loud to him.

For Christmas we got him a Radio Shack 60 in 1 Electronics Lab, and we're now on project 47. These labs are great, and they're quite safe for kids. Also, one of Kenny's favorite birthday presents was a lantern battery, a bunch of switches, bulbs, and buzzers, which he has rigged up into a sort of intercom system for the kids' bedrooms.

This overwhelming interest in electronics is the driving force behind almost all the homeschooling work we do. Kenny hates to write, but he's making a book - "The Electronics Book" - with over 50 pages. Each page has a different component taped into it with a brief description of what it does in a circuit. His artwork is almost all intricate drawings of circuit boards. He has found a real use for math, figuring out the total capacitance and resistance in circuits by using formulas (stuff I learned in 6th grade, I think!).

One warning about dismantling . things: cut the power cord off, so kids can't plug it in, and discharge the capacitors (I mean the big ones) with a screw driver before you let kids fiddle with something. (Parents can read the Mims book I mentioned - he is very clear about what is and isn't OK to do.)

Finding Work in Vegetarian Community

In GWS #89, Sonnet Pierce (MO) wrote about her interest in finding an apprenticeship with a vegetarian chef. We asked her what kind of response she got to her letter, and she wrote:

I have gotten a lot of responses to my apprenticeship letter. No one has offered me an apprenticeship, but I have a lot of very interesting pen-pals as a result of the letter. I sent the letter to three homeschooling magazines and two vegetarian ones. One of the vegetarian magazines interviewed me for an article (they didn't publish my letter, but it was neat being interviewed for a national magazine).

The other vegetarian magazine published my letter, and I got quite a few responses to it. A vegetarian group in Portland, Oregon picked up my letter and put it in their newsletter. I got a great pen-pal who lives in Portland, and with some help from her I ended up going to a vegetarian conference there last month. It was great! I was on the staff (I helped out with odd jobs) and I got to meet a lot of great people, including a vegetarian chef that I have admired for years. I just recently got a letter from a man in Mauritius (an island in the Indian Ocean) who had seen my letter. Boy, was I surprised!

I have written two articles for a teenage vegetarian magazine. Then a woman called me last week wanting me to do some recipes for a book that she is writing on teenage vegetarianism. She got my name from the woman who organizes the teen magazine. Five of my recipes are going to

be in Victoria Moran's new book (Victoria is also a GWS reader!), and I am currently working on writing a low-fat vegetarian cookbook of my own (none of my recipes contain eggs or dairy products). I also might write an article for another vegetarian magazine. I met the people who publish this magazine in Oregon – they are the same people whom I helped at the conference.

What I have learned from all of this is that it really makes sense to write articles and to write to a lot of people who are interested in, or part of, whatever work you want to pursue. This is a good way of getting things done when you don't have access to a lot of people near where you live.

I haven't been paid for any of the articles that I have written. That is, I haven't been paid with money, but it has all been worthwhile because I have learned a lot and made a lot of good friends. I would really like to encourage people to follow their dreams and to do whatever they can to get their name out there, whether it's writing letters, writing articles, or offering some type of service. You'll be amazed at the results!

Began Reading at 11

Hannah Letter of Pennsylvania writes:

Our daughter Ruth is 12 and has never been to school. She was a late reader and did not really start to read much at all until last year. Of course, the prophets of doom predicted that as long as she did not go to school, she would never read well. I am happy to say that she reads almost everything now. I have enclosed *The Monthly Express*, the newsletter which Ruth puts out. She (with my help as co-editor) goes through a few newspapers, including our local paper and the *Wall Street Journal*, and selects articles which she finds interesting. She started by sending her newsletter to family members, but is now charging $10.50 for 12 issues, and she now has 30 subscribers. She has no problem reading any newspaper and thinks nothing of reading *Wall Street Journal* editorials.

Museum Volunteer

Anna Barnett of Oregon writes:

I am an unschooled 13 year old. I work as a junior volunteer at WISTEC, the local science museum. I have worked there since September. I work mostly with the paid staff, but also with a few adult volunteers. When I first started, I felt kind of like a fifth wheel, where people were trying to think of something for me to do, but soon I began to feel pretty useful, taking messages to people, screwing screws, and passing out brochures at fairs and whatnot. I think the adults really appreciate my help.

I got started by deciding I wanted to volunteer. I called Mark, one of the WISTEC staff. I'd taken classes with him and was friendly and familiar with him. He's in charge in the junior volunteers. He told me there was a form I should fill out, so I went to WISTEC and did that, and now I call them (sometimes they call me) to find out if they need me that week. Sometimes I help set up exhibits, sometimes I work at a booth at a fair, and I'm hoping to be able to lead school groups through the museum pretty soon.

This volunteer job has absolutely nothing to do with my future career – I hope to be an actress. It's still a lot of fun, though, and I really like working with other people on big projects like this. My volunteer job is pretty important to me as part of my curriculum. I like working in a learning place that's not based on the school way of thinking. I also think I'm learning valuable lessons in relating to other people in a work environment.

Library Volunteer

In GWS #95 Nora Muller asked to hear from kids who did volunteer work. Zachary Hoyt (ME) wrote:

My project is volunteering at the local school library. I am 7. I work with my mother, the librarian, and about three other volunteers. I feel like the librarian there really listens to you, not like some people that I could mention. I'm beginning my second year of volunteer work. I used to go to art and gym classes at the school. I went with my mother, but I had so much time there that I couldn't think of anything to do very often and then my mother suggested that I help her at the library, where she was volunteering. I tried it and liked it, so I turned into a volunteer. I have learned a lot about libraries and how they work. What I do at the library is usually sorting and stacking shelf list cards, stamping magazines, and getting new books ready to go on the "new book" shelves.

Thinking About Computers

Sue Smith Heavenrich (NY) writes:

Our local school library got a CD ROM with Grollier's Encyclopedia on it. I had the opportunity to use it one day when I was searching for information for an article I was writing. To find information in this on-line reference, you can type in a subject search or a name that will get you to a particular article. It gets you information fast and cross-references it with other articles *for the topic under which you are searching.*

This is the important difference between CD ROMs and regular encyclopedias. I was watching how my son Coulter (6 1/2) uses our set of encyclopedias. The other day he wanted to look up ships, to see the different types, as he was drawing ships and needed details. So he finds the correct volume: is it S-SN or SO-SZ? He decides on the first and then begins looking at the letter combinations: Sa, Se ... Sh. This is great, because he's doing this alphabetical ordering that in school would be taught using some worksheet out of context. Then he gets to Sh and works on the next letter: Sha, She, Shi ... and on the way to ships he comes to shields. "Oh," he says. "Look at all these neat shields." And he looks at the pictures and reads the captions, making a few remarks to me comparing Viking shields with those of knights in the Middle Ages. Eventually he gets to ships. Sure, it's taken longer than it would using a CD ROM, but I marvel at what he's gleaned through this experience of browsing. I would not want to eliminate that option, and the on-line reference doesn't make browsing in this fashion available. Also, you can carry a volume to a table for work (copying a detail of a dragon ship) whereas you can't do that with a computer.

Now, I'm not against computers. After all, that's what I'm using to type this letter. And I do sometimes let my children play games or write things on the computer. We don't have any children's software – no programs where you run mazes or type in the correct answer and get bells and whistles. We do have chess and some other strategy games. One that they love to play is "minesweep," where you try to figure out where the mines are in the harbor and disarm them. If you're wrong, you blow up (they really like that). At first I was very against their playing this game, but as I watch how they use the game I've changed my views. Clues are given that demand a lot of logical reasoning from the player. You are told how many mines are touching a particular square in the grid, and you need to deduce where the mines are. I watched Coulter play. He would talk through his thinking: Well, this square has one mine and this one [touching on a diagonal] has three, and they both share this square in common. Maybe that's it."

One of the neat things about the chess program is that the computer won't let you cheat. Toby (3 1/2) always wants to play chess with one of us, but he refuses to move the pieces properly. Chess is the only game (so far) for which I insist on using the rules as they stand – for historical and mathematical reasons. When we say, "You can't move that way," Toby gets upset and sometimes dissolves into tears. When he plays on the computer and moves a piece incorrectly, the computer puts the piece back and he has to try again. Eventually he comes up with a move that works. But what happens is that no longer are we adversaries saying no. Now his brother can come over and say, "You could try this," and they are working together.

Neat thing #2 about the computer: my older son does not like to write yet. He goes to great lengths to avoid putting pencil to paper – he will even type a letter instead of handwriting it, and typing takes an hour longer. But on the word processor he and Toby will sit together. Toby will say, "Spell ____," and Coulter will, and they will do this for a few minutes, just thinking of words they know.

FOCUS:
When a Subject is Difficult

For this issue's Focus, we asked several young GWS readers, when a subject is difficult for you, or when you just don't like it, how do you want your parents to respond?

Doesn't Want to be Pushed to Read

From Gunther Kurtz (NY):

I will be 9 by the time this issue of GWS comes out, and I have trouble with reading. I don't want to be pushed to learn, and I'm not being pushed. My parents could push me by making me read every day, but they don't do that, and I'm glad. Sometimes I want my mom to do creative things to help me, but I don't know exactly what I want her to do. She does read out loud to me. Sometimes I think I would like to try doing an hour of easy reading a day, but I don't do that yet. I would like to do that with my mom, but I haven't asked her yet because I don't think I'm ready. I think I'll know I'm ready when I start looking at books more and getting more interested in them.

I can sound out "cat," "rat," simple words. I learned to recognize the "at" part. I can sound out other things, but then they don't go together right. I seem to skip some of the middle.

It doesn't bother me that I can't read, except when my little sister wants me to read to her, and when my brother, who is 6, says he wants to learn to read. I want to read before he does.

I know that people littler than me can read. But I'm real good at math. I don't need to read right now, but I'll be glad when I can.

Math from Computer Games, Carpentry

From Ashley Lynn (check NY):

I am 10 years old. I think that if your child is having a lot of trouble in a subject, like math, you shouldn't make them do it anyway. I think it will be really hard for them and they will think math is difficult and boring. They'll cringe when you say the word. But there will come a point when they want to learn and they're ready. Then they'll think it's fun and easy and they will learn it real quick. In any case, I don't think you should nag. It will make them irritated and angry and they will probably just walk away.

I got to a certain point in math and I didn't want to go any further. I would cry when my mom talked about how I needed to learn more. We forgot about it for a while. Then I saw my friend doing some problems and decided that if she could do it, so could I. I asked my mom about it and learned in about ten minutes.

Another approach would be to play games that have some thing to do with something your child is interested in. Let's say your child likes space. You could play games that would show them how you would really use math in a spaceship. For example, you can pretend to be flying in a spaceship, going at 16,000 miles per hour. Mars is 1,000 miles away and you have to be sure not to hit it.

A game I particularly like is Operation Neptune. Part of the game is like a video game pretending that you are in a submarine, searching through water full of poisonous fish for pieces of broken space capsule. When you put them together, they will tell the story of a space station on the planet Neptune. The computer keeps stopping you to ask you mathematical questions that you would really need to know the answers to in this situation.

During the period when I was doing "no math," I was looking through a carpentry book and I decided I wanted to build a coaster car. The book said that you should probably try five or six of the other simpler projects in the book before attempting to build the car, but I didn't want to do any of the other projects. Blocks, boats, and bird houses just weren't my thing - I wanted to build a car. I asked my dad to help me, and we spent the rest of the week measuring, sawing, and nailing. I see now that I had been doing math without even knowing it. Now with my dad I'm attempting to build a treehouse. I'm sure this will be at least equally mathematical.

Starting Over With Basics

From Jes Seaver (GA):

This is my second year of homeschooling. Before that I was in school for eight years. Whether I was in school or out, I have always had trouble with math. The first year I was homeschooling, we used a Saxon Math text. My mom made me do a lesson every day and by the end of the year I finished the book. However, I did not *learn* it. I just struggled through it. I kept telling myself I actually did know what I was doing, but I didn't. I had never liked math, but I knew that I needed and wanted to be able to do it.

So at the beginning of this year, I convinced my parents to let me start math over - to go back and learn the basic skills, so that when I came around again to the more complicated stuff, I would probably be able to learn it. At first they didn't like the idea, but after they thought about it, they realized it was the best thing to do. I'm glad they accepted my plan. It showed that they had faith in me and my ideas.

We bought some new math books which showed me new ways of dealing with numbers, other than the traditional ways. This is working great. Now I actually like math. I'm still slow with it, but my parents are fine with that, so long as I am learning.

Learning Why Something is Important

From Clare Murphy (PA):

"Mom, I really don't want to do this now; I am too tired," is my cry from the blue couch where I am sitting with Mom and my Latin book. I am very interested in ancient Rome and would like to pursue a career in the study of it. I thought that Latin would be helpful for reading ancient scrolls and learning facts from the people who actually experienced them, but I didn't realize how hard it was going to be to learn this language. I am using a really interesting book that combines history with learning the language. In the beginning it was easy to translate the little stories about the family whom I have been following throughout the book, but as time went on it got a lot harder for me because I didn't study the declensions and conjugations that make up Latin. My mother told me that if I studied them it would get much easi-

er. I finally saw that she was right and I learned the declensions and conjugations. The stories are now easier to translate, but I still get frustrated sometimes.

My parents have never forced me to do any educational subject, but then I never refused to do any of the basic subjects - math, science, writing, and especially not history. I think that part of the reason that I didn't refuse was *that* my parents had always shown and explained to me the importance of a well-rounded education, and I am around other people who use and believe in a good, complete education. If I was ever bored or frustrated with a subject, we would find another, more interesting book or we would make up an activity, like an Australia museum I decided to make out of a cardboard box for geography and science. My parents would show me the advantages of learning a subject or the disadvantages of not learning it as well as showing me how it can be used in everyday life. By doing this they instilled in me a wish to learn, and even an excitement about using the things I might have thought useless.

When I was younger I was having a hard time with math. It wasn't that I couldn't do it; I just wasn't having fun, beyond counting how many plates to put on the table when we had guests. My parents suggested things like measuring a room and figuring out its area or using mathematical games. I never stopped doing math because I had to keep up with my older brother who was and still is into higher (very high) math. Finally we found a book that was perfect for me. It was *Mathematics: A Human Endeavor*. It showed how math was used in everyday life, and it was fun. Just what I wanted and needed. My parents didn't force me to do math, but we compromised so that I was always interested.

Forcing people to do something they don't want to do often makes them resist more and turns them off from whatever they are being forced to do, but giving people a little nudge by showing them how fun and useful something can be will allow them to learn the subject more thoroughly. So now I am sitting on the couch, Latin book in hand, calling, "Mom, could we review my declensions and conjugations now?"

Parents Helped Him Enjoy Writing

From Jared Hope (NV):

I think it depends on the child, but if I were working with a child, the approach I would take would be a combination in which I would not push hard but would supply various little bits of information until the child felt ready to approach the subject.

I have never really liked writing, but my parents have helped me enjoy it more by giving me topics to write a fictional story on, and by putting my name and interests in several magazines to get a pen-pal. Now, even though I still don't like to do much more writing than necessary, it is definitely less tedious.

When I needed to improve my punctuation, however, my parents made me do the work because it was not something I would do on my own. It turned out to be a good decision, so it certainly illustrates the point that there is no answer that will work in every situation.

Recovering Interest in Math

From Kirsten Kurtz (NY):

I went to school for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade, and my problem was that I hated math, because in first grade they really pushed too hard. So I totally shut down and decided that I hated it and wouldn't do it for anything. Once I got out of school and started homeschooling, whenever Mom would try to make me do math, I'd get really upset. Each time I would even see math, I would just get so upset that finally my mom just decided to let it go for a while. The second year I was out of school, I didn't do any math at all for the entire year.

After that, it became easier. I guess I finally got worried about not being able to do math, and I got more interested in working on it. Also, my brothers were doing it. We almost started all over again with stuff that was even too easy for me, so that I kind of grew into it again. It was a gradual thing. I'm 13 now, and sometimes I still get frustrated and confused about math, but I don't hate it anymore. I'm using an algebra book now, and I think next year I'm going to do something more interesting, like math games.

If I had been pushed, there's no way I would be able to do math now. My mom still does have to say, "OK, it's time to do math now," but if I don't feel like doing it then I can say so and we agree to do it later. It's good to give kids those kinds of choices so they're ready for real life. I know that I have to do math, and I still need my mom to remind me to do it, but I should be able to pick *when* to do it. I think probably in a few years I'm going to be ready to do math without my mother reminding me to do it at all.

A Tutor Helped

From Tamar Malt (OR):

When I was 10 my parents sent away for the Calvert curriculum. I took the placement test and tested for fourth grade. I was mad and devastated since I knew I was smart and should have been at least in the fifth grade.

It seemed that the main problem was with math. The label of fourth grade bothered my ego so much that I eventually stopped doing math altogether for a year. The problem was also that I had just started homeschooling when I was 9, and for a while I really wanted to stop doing school stuff. But I do love math, and my mom eventually hired an outstanding math tutor. The tutor made me realize how easy and fun math is. It was so natural with him that he had me into math I hadn't experienced yet - algebra and geometry.

I think parents should make it clear that they're not pressuring you, and it's OK if you say no, but if you feel like you need help with something, they will help you. I like everything to be said clearly, so I think it works out for parents to say exactly what they mean. Then, if the child doesn't want the help, she can say it. I think kids usually let parents know if they aren't ready or if it's too much help.

I also think it's OK for parents to make suggestions, as long as the kids know they can say no. By the time my mother suggested getting me a tutor, I was feeling ready for that, so her idea was right for me at the time. But I knew I could say no if I didn't want a tutor.

Our family then moved, and I no longer had my tutor. I was getting bored and wanted some more structure to my learning. A few months later my aunt came to visit us from Guyana. She does Calvert with her sons. I was talking to her about maybe starting again with Calvert, and I told her of my fear of the placement test. She told me that she thought I could do the same work her son does, and he's in the seventh grade course. She encouraged me to take the placement test again. I was hoping for at least sixth grade level. To my utter exultation I placed in the seventh grade.

My parents were hesitant to invest in Calvert once again, but agreed to do it if I would pay for 25% of the tuition. I am now doing the course by myself

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with very little help from my parents. Now I am also getting to the point where I need more help with grammar, and my parents have suggested getting me a tutor. I think working with a tutor again will be great. There's great fun in learning from someone who loves a particular subject.

My Conscience and My Parents

From Vallie Raymond (WA):

Almost all the 14 years of my life, my parents have never made me do anything that I didn't find tolerable. For instance, take my math (please). Math and I aren't that fond of each other. With each subject, my parents and I have tried to find the best possible way for me to learn it. So when I chose to learn math from a Saxon Algebra textbook, my parents knew I wouldn't despise every minute of it. But when I can I'll put it off and let the book collect dust on the shelf for a while.

Don't get me wrong, though. Just because I get frustrated and confused with math and I skip a day or two or three, my parents don't give me much flak. But they don't praise me for it, either. I admit, I do like my parents to notice after a while that my math isn't getting done and to bug me about it.

What usually works for me is my mom or dad will hint around when I'm just sitting doing nothing, waiting for my friends to get out of school, that "this would be a good time to do some of your math." Mom sometimes says in the morning, "OK, Val, tonight after dinner we'll both sit down and work on some of your algebra." That's great because I know ahead of time, so it's not sprung on me on the spur of the moment. Or, if all else fails and my parents can see that I'm just bumming around the house until I can go out with my friends, they'll say what most kids dread to hear (but it works): "If you can't make time for your math, you can't make time for your friends." After that my algebra gets done in no time. The only thing is, usually by then I've told myself, "OK, I'm ready to deal with this now." So I've already confirmed, with myself, what I have to do. Then the next time my parents mention my math, I'm ready to handle it.

So between my conscience and my parents, my math usually gets done.

Different Ways to Handle Problems

Jenny Turner of Virginia writes:

I'm a 12-year-old, seventh-grade girl, and while most of my subjects have come easily to me, I have had a difficult time with a few of them. My parents have handled each problem in a different way. Also, my mom says that I tend not to like to try new things, so she makes me try a new thing two or three times before she will let me quit. Usually I end up liking them, and some of my favorite activities are ones that I did not want to try at first, like Writing Club.

The few things I remember having problems with are fractions, Latin, and Math Olympiads. I had trouble with fractions and I was really frustrated, so Mom put off learning fractions until later, while concentrating on other math topics. The next year I still didn't understand them, so Mom put them off again, and the third time, I finally understood them.

I am in my fourth year of the Cambridge Latin course (equal to third year high school). While it was easy at first, it has gotten harder each year, and now it is very hard and time-consuming. When I complained to my mother she said I could quit, but I didn't want to because I wanted to get through the course and I like the people in my class. When I have problems translating, my mom helps me, and when she doesn't know how to translate something, I call the teacher.

Math Olympiads is a worldwide math competition for advanced fifth and sixth graders which my mom made me take part in. I had a lot of trouble with the problems because they are very, very hard (for me). I got frustrated because I did not know how to do them all, and I would start crying. But my mom made me do them anyway, and I'm glad she did because the second year I was one of the hundred kids out of almost 79,000 in the world who got them all right.

All the different ways my parents have handled my problems have worked in the end, and I don't think it really matters how they handle them. My mom is always there to help me when I am having difficulties but when I would rather do it myself, I can shoo her away.

Took a While to be Ready

From Mae Shell (VT):

The academic subject that I dislike the most is math. I wasn't born a math lover, and I learned to hate it even more because when I was about 8, my parents decided that I needed to learn how to do subtraction on paper. At the time, I was not at all interested in the idea and was perfectly comfortable with the math skills I had. Despite all this, they sat me down and attempted to teach me. Within only a few minutes I was very frustrated and in tears. I just couldn't understand the concept of borrowing numbers from one column to another.

This happened several times. Finally, a few years later, I decided I *wanted* to understand subtraction. After asking for help, I figured it out in a very short amount of time. However, even though I could now do subtraction, it was years before I felt ready to learn another math skill, and then only because I knew that I had to become fairly fluent in math to get along in our society.

In this instance, my parents interfering with my natural readiness didn't have very good results. If they had just left me alone, I probably would have learned all the basic math skills much sooner. I like doing challenging new things, as long as no one pushes me into them.

The one subject that I sometimes wish my parents *had* pushed me into a little more is geography. My knowledge in this subject is limited, mostly because I've never really been interested in learning more about it until now. It's not like we don't have books on the subject, or maps. We do. But I guess I was never terribly interested in it, or else I was too busy to be getting into another academic subject.

I'm not saying I think parents should push their kids into something before they're ready. When I was, say, 8, I don't think I was ready to think about geography. But I probably could have thought about it a few years ago. I guess sometimes I think that it just never occurred to me to get into geography, and maybe if my parents had *mentioned* it, I would have said, "Oh yeah! I'll try that."

Right now I am learning quite a bit of geography in two creative ways. One of them is *The Geography Coloring Book*. The other is a computer game called "Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?" I do wish that we had found these resources sooner, and maybe we could have if either I or my parents had looked a little harder.

I'm not really blaming my parents, because it probably wouldn't have been a good idea to push me into geography. But there is a big difference between *suggesting* and *pushing*. In any case, if a parent notices a lack of interest in a certain area, a simple, "I notice you don't seem to be doing much ___. Are you not interested in it, or did it just never occur to you to pursue it?" should do the trick. Maybe the kid will agree to try the subject, or maybe the kid will really just not be interested (in which case it should be left at that, and discussed again at a later date). If someone really isn't interested in a subject, she shouldn't be forced to learn it. And if someone tries a new subject, and just doesn't feel ready, she should be allowed to try it again when she is ready.

In general, I think parents should leave their kids pretty much alone in academic areas. Almost always, the interest will spark eventually. In some cases, a person may never become really interested in a certain subject. But if it is important for getting along in the world (like math), that person *will* eventually learn a minimum of it, because it's necessary.

JOHN HOLT'S BOOK AND MUSIC STORE

Women Music Makers

by Janet Nichols #3170 $18.95

When you think of the world's most beloved composers of classical music, the names that leap to mind - Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Chopin, etc. - are all men, every last one of them. Have you ever wondered why we never hear about women composers? Have women historically shown little interest in or capacity for musical composition? Is composing, in fact, a "man's art"? Or is there, perhaps, another story waiting to be told?

Researching and writing about people who have been left out of history - mainly women and minorities - is one of my greatest passions, so to find this book about several women I'd never even heard of was a real joy. *Women Music Makers* is a treasure trove of stories about female musicians who struggled to make their way in a field that was completely closed to women for hundreds of years. Although many women played the piano or harp at home, female musicians were banned in most churches and theaters. Only after 1900 did it become acceptable for women to appear in public playing music, and even as late as 1940 they were excluded from most major orchestras. With few exceptions, playing musical instruments just wasn't "feminine":

> The violin was out, since a woman's pretty face was distorted when she pressed her chin into the instrument. A woman clutching a cello between her legs was considered scandalous. A young lady blowing into a wind instrument or beating a drum was simply vulgar.

Of course, society couldn't keep women with talent and determination from playing and composing music anyway. Almost all of the ten women featured in this book started composing their own pieces when they were still small children. But no matter how great their talents or how prolific they were, their accomplishments were never properly acknowledged.

Take the case of Fanny Mendelssohn (1805-1847). Although she had been given a thorough musical education and had proven herself to be incredibly gifted, she was never encouraged to pursue music in the same way her famous brother was. A letter from her father says it all:

> Music will perhaps become [Felix's] profession, whilst for *you* it can and must only be an ornament, never the root of your being and doing... Your very joy at the praise he earns proves that you might, in his place, have merited equal approval. Remain true to these sentiments and to this line of conduct; they are feminine, and only what is truly feminine is an ornament to your sex.

When women did publish music, the critics ripped their compositions to shreds, and very few people would actually agree to peform them. Female composers were denigrated for their audacity; Barbara Strozzi (1609-1664) was even accused of being a prostitute because "nice" women didn't write music. Fanny Mendelssohn found a way around this by publishing her work under her brother Felix's name, and Clara Schumann (1819-1896) published some of her work in conjunction with her husband Robert.

Besides their dedication to music, every one of these women led interesting lives worth reading about. Dame Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) was a suffragette who became close friends with Emmeline Pankhurst and Virginia Woolf. Florence Price (1888-1953) battled racial discrimination as she worked to become a well-known American composer. Creating unique American music threaded with African themes, she was the first black woman to compose a symphony performed by a major orchestra. Amy Beach (1867-1944), who began composing her own music at the age of 3, worked hard to get women accepted into the musical world. In 1924 she helped found the Society of American Women Composers in order to give other women the opportunities she herself had been given.

The living composers featured in this book - Vivian Fine, Joan Tower, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, and Laurie Anderson - have produced some amazing works and lead very exciting lives. Still, they are not as well-known as they deserve to be; male dominance in the profession lingers on.

There is so little published about women composers that this book is a must-read for anyone interested in the music world. Budding musicians will be inspired by these women's stories and history lovers will be happy to have some female names to add to their knowledge of great composers.

— Pam Gingold

The Acoustic Guitar Guide

by Larry Sandberg #3110 $14.95

Buying a guitar can be a confusing process. What kind of instrument do I want? Which brands are good? Which price is reasonable? Larry Sandberg helps to answer these questions in this well-written book. He first explores some of the history of guitars and the changes in sound and construction which have evolved over time. He talks about specific types of guitars, from classical guitars to dobros, although most of the emphasis is on G-string flat top steel-string guitars, the kind of acoustic guitars most of us play or have played. Larry discusses the differences in design, construction, and materials and explains how these affect not only the sound but also the price of the instrument. This kind of information is very important to consider before a

guitar purchase. It is important that you find an instrument that matches your needs and intended use. For example, you don't buy a classical guitar to play bluegrass nor do you buy a thousand-dollar instrument to take to the beach for singalongs.

The second part of this book is an extensive survey of North American-made and imported guitars. It discusses sound characteristics, construction, and quality and gives comparison prices. It is a real treat to look through all the different instrument descriptions and photographs. Of course it would be much better to be able to play them all, and this is what the author recommends also. Playing the instrument is still the most important process in choosing a guitar.

The book is arranged in well-written, well-indexed sections which can be read separately, or the book can be read cover to cover. It has a good glossary at the end to clarify unfamiliar terms. The book covers the basics very well but doesn't overload you with trivia. Happy reading and happy pickin'!

— Don Christensen

Fantasia: Easy Piano

arranged by Bill Boyd #3122 $9.95

In *Never Too Late*, John Holt wrote at length about the strong influence *Fantasia* had upon him as a child, especially in terms of his lifelong appreciation for classical music. Now that it is available as a videocassette I have the opportunity to see firsthand how enchanting this movie can be to children. Lauren (7) and Alison (4) don't ask to see the movie now as much as they did when we got it last Christmas, but it was definitely among the Farengas' box office hits for months back then. Each girl had her favorite sections, but they were both totally enamored with Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, since it features winged horses and ponies in a beautiful Acadian setting. Even though there is no dialogue and very little in the way of a story, my girls would still request to see and hear this sequence over and over, a request we could easily agree to since the music is so delightful and the animation warm and fanciful. But I realized that it wasn't just the images that make this movie appealing to children when I started pecking out themes from *A Night on Bald Mountain*, *The Nutcracker*, and *The Pastoral* on our piano.

"That's the scary song from the mountain, Daddy!" said Lauren.

"Pony song!" said Ali.

The music had truly become part of their experience. They remembered the themes, could identify them, and enjoyed hearing them.

But we had even more fun when I got this book. Often when I was playing something on the piano Lauren and Alison would play-act from the movie or improvise their own ballet. Though these are "easy piano" arrangements they are not merely single-note melodies with simple triads. This arranger has compressed these pieces with greater care than is often taken in these situations so, for instance, Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* spans six pages. A few pieces, I must admit, are skimpy - Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* is represented only by the *Dance of the Maidens* section and is just two pages of music. But that is a well-chosen piece: it does capture the mood and my girls knew it was "part of the dinosaur movie." In all fairness, reducing the *Rite of Spring* to an easy piano arrangement must have been very challenging; this is the only piece in the book that does not have chord symbols due to the unusual nature of the harmony.

This book will be useful to any beginning pianist interested in classical music, but especially to those who saw and enjoyed *Fantasia*. The tunes are familiar enough, even without having seen the movie, to be recognized by friends when they are played. The arrangements provide just enough challenge to encourage attention and practice, and they do not sound childish. Mastering the easy version of *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* at 6 or 7 can give a child the interest and confidence to tackle the complete piece someday. The music is very clearly printed, with larger-than-usual notation. The book's binding is glue, but the book is made to withstand repeated flattening; none of the pages have come loose in the many months we've been handling and sharing it.

Another reason I like this collection so much is that it is almost by default an ear-training collection, due to the popularity of the selections. Since the melodies are so familiar, especially to viewers of *Fantasia*, it is very easy for young pianists to know if the rhythms are off or to decide "that doesn't sound right" and to figure out how to make it sound the way they hear it in their heads. Another bonus is if you play a guitar or another chord instrument you can add some more texture to the pieces and have fun playing along with your pianist. This book would be appropriate for pianists who have been reading music just for a short while or who are learning to play piano with *Mrs. Stewart's Piano Lessons* and are starting to read musical notation (about three-quarters of the way through Mrs. Stewart's Book One). — Pat Farenga

Watercolor for the Artistically Undiscovered

by Thatcher Hurd & John Cassidy #3168 $18.95

We have loved Thatcher Hurd for a long time. His picture books, full of gentle humor and bright, playful paintings, have always been among our favorites. We just knew that anything by him had to be good. And it is.

Here Hurd has teamed up with John Cassidy and the Klutz Press gang to create and unusual package with everything you need to begin watercolor painting — except the water, of course. The cake paints are of extremely good quality. These colors are very vivid and stand up well to water. The medium-sized brush is sturdy and great for both wide strokes and fine work. Over half the pages in the book are high-grade watercolor paper, which will be a real treat for anyone who's tried to get by using regular paper. The margins of all the pages are filled with so many examples of watercolor technique and paintings of Hurd's quirky creatures that it's hard not to pick up the brush and start doodling right away.

And when you do start, you'll find another happy surprise. Since Hurd used the same paints, brush, and paper in the

creation of the book that are now provided with the book, your own beginning squiggles will look remarkably like his. In fact, my family couldn't tell some of my little pictures from Hurd's until they looked closely. Not many books can offer that much gratification so quickly.

All this nice packaging merely complements the actual instruction, however. Hurd's technique is easily summed up by his Ironclad Rule of Spirited Watercolors: You're better than you think you are. Hurd firmly believes in your instincts, and throughout the book he cheers you on from the sidelines. Even when he progresses to more advanced techniques, like shadow and perspective, he keeps the process simple and encourages you to play, play, play.

I have dabbled in watercolors for years, despite the fact that most of my enjoyment in painting was systematically destroyed by school art classes. Hurd's encouragement has returned to me much of my lost self-confidence. While the book hasn't turned me into the artist Hurd is, it has helped me to realize that yes, I'm an artist too.

My son Eoin loved this book immediately too, although for reasons different from mine. Eoin sees the book as a chance to invite one of his idols into our kitchen for a cozy little chat and painting session. Hurd's playfulness suits Eoin perfectly because there's no pressure here to replicate examples, as many other art books demand. Loving Hurd as much as he does, Eoin expected a lot from this book, and he has not been disappointed. In fact, he owned the book for months before he ever dipped his brush because he so enjoyed just looking at the pictures and reading Hurd's suggestions.

My one initial reservation about the book was the price. Then I realized that I'd never find art lessons from one of our favorite illustrators, plus paper, paints, and a brush to keep, for only $18.95. Looking at it that way, *Watercolor* is an outright bargain! — Phoebe Wells

Learning By Heart: Teachings to Free the Creative Spirit

by Corita Kent & Jan Steward #3134 $12.50

For Corita Kent and her student Jan Steward, learning by heart doesn't just mean memorizing something. The title of this book refers to the poetic, metaphorical meanings of the heart -- the organ of love, appreciation, devotion, passion, openness, and the chief sustainer of life. The book's subtitle, "Teachings to Free the Creative Spirit," more literally describes its content. This is a richly and densely packed workbook that suggests and encourages many paths to experiencing the creativity that exists within all of us.

Like many of the books that we sell here, this one may very well change your life. It will change how you see the world around you and how you view your place and possibilities within it. It is about learning all the time and in all directions, with depth, breadth, and substance.

Corita Kent was a gifted and famous visual artist, but her teaching was about the spirit behind the artistic process, so the book's value is by no means limited to visual expression. Nor did Kent see any great distinction between artistic expression and many kinds of play, work, communication, and life in general. This is an eloquent and vigorous argument for art and real life being interconnected and, at their best, indistinguishable from one another. This can happen once the barriers to perception and creativity are removed, and this book details hundreds of activities to get rid of these barriers. For unschoolers it is a nearly exact and powerful parallel to our belief that education and real life are, at their best, likewise indistinguishable.

Corita Kent worked as a college art teacher whose classes were designed to open her students' eyes to the beauty in the natural and human-made world. Building on increased perception of the environment, she then developed exercises to help students

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understand structure, technique, and the tools available to create art that reflects and reacts to the new way of seeing things. The book is full of images and ideas worth remembering so they can be shared with others who will appreciate them.

Learning By Heart is currently being widely used in colleges to teach future art teachers, but it is not at all academic. It is down-to-earth, practical, and straightforward, as exciting and accessible as Corita Kent meant art to be. It is wonderful to have the ideas of this great teacher readily available.

This is a book that will not sit on the shelf after being read once. Developing as an artist is a slow, deliberate, ongoing process, and this book will be your continuing, joyful companion in this process. There are hundreds of photographs, drawings, and paintings from all over the world, many of them contemporary. It is fascinating to see what people do and have always done with limited resources but unlimited spirit.

This is a great book for homeschoolers in that it inspires activity and gives direction without seeking to control or being invested in a particular outcome. Solid respect for the learner is implied in every page. It can be read by adults, for themselves or for getting ideas that can be adapted for little ones, and it can be used independently from about 11 through extreme old age.

— Maureen Carey

Hands Around the World

by Susan Milord #3126 $12.95

Owning *Hands Around the World* is like having an international festival in your house every day. Beginning on January 1, Susan Milord takes you through the seasons with a new theme every 4-6 days. Within the context of each theme, each day brings you either a holiday to celebrate, a craft or food to make, a game to play, or simply some related information to consider and share. We already own several books like this, but this one was irresistible.

Hands has many strong points. One is the variety of cultures presented. Milord includes contributions from over 50 countries, offering slices of life from both modern societies and the traditional ways of indigenous peoples. To her credit, she also includes cultures often neglected by books of this sort. For example, in the section on languages, one day is devoted to the Deaf community and sign languages.

Another strength is the flexibility of each day's suggestions. For instance, you won't feel at a total loss on July 22 if you don't have any frozen juice can lids saved up to make medals for your local neighborhood Olympics (which you planned on July 21). You'll still enjoy the information on appropriate music for your awards ceremony so much that you might just spend the day researching various national anthems instead. In just a few paragraphs on each day, Milord gives you enough food for thought to stimulate your curiosity and spark plenty of ideas to follow up. Also, the resources at the back are excellent for delving deeper into a particular area.

Hands is not without a few flaws. The most disappointing one to our family is the statement that Union Jack is the flag of Ireland. I can't understand how Milord made that mistake when the book is so up-to-date on the dissolution of the USSR and changes in the European Economic Community (this was published in 1992). And please don't make your Cuban Bread with 56 cups of flour; 5 to 6 will suffice.

Unfortunately, but predictably, the first two themes of September are school-oriented. Much to our surprise, we actually enjoyed the information here comparing school days (five recesses per day in Japan), years (begins in March in Chile), uniforms (de rigueur in most countries), lunch breaks (three hours in Spain), buildings (none in parts of Pakistan), courses of study (drumming is required in Ghana), examinations (O levels and A levels explained), and extracurricular activities (held in Children's Palaces in China). It's too bad Milord doesn't mention homeschooling anywhere; maybe she'll include it in a future edition. Amusingly enough, though, she follows all this schoolish stuff with two sections on free time and games!

These drawbacks aside, one thing we especially appreciate is Milord's attention to ecology. Many days have an environmental focus, as do the craft projects. Milord suggests only open-ended projects related to a theme, often using things you might have otherwise thrown away and which you'll probably want to re-use in future celebrations.

Milord also focuses on peace issues because multicultural activities are only meaningful when open-mindedness about other peoples and the spirit of cooperation are prominent parts. This tone is prevalent throughout the book, but also receives special attention on certain days when the topic is acceptance of others and communication. She also encourages people to think not just of global concerns, but to look into their own communities to celebrate diversity, improve neighborhood life, and build bridges there too.

Because *Hands* has so many great ideas, we found we couldn't possibly do everything in just one year. We're looking forward to starting all over again next year, embellishing here, exploring more there, and simply enjoying lots of our favorites again. *Hands* has found a very welcome spot in our home, and we're sure you'll find a lot to love in it too. — Phoebe Wells

The Art Lesson

by Tomie de Paola #3114 $13.95

This is the story of Tomie de Paola's struggle to keep his individuality as a small child beginning school. It is a beautifully illustrated picture book that movingly tells how this kindergarten and first grader stood up for his own ideas and succeeded in getting the adults to let him do things his way.

The central character, Tommy, was already an accomplished artist at the age of 5. The portrait of how his family was supportive of his work is wonderful. He knew that real art is original and involves lots of hard work and was enthusiastically anticipating art lessons to develop his ability. The reality of school art lessons - like being forced to copy and having only severely restricted materials to use - is more than he can bear. He is able to speak up for himself and work out compromises with his teachers. — Maureen and Aidin Carey

1994 Directory of Families

Here is our complete 1994 Directory of Families. The Directory of Organizations begins on page 35. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information – last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

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Directory of Organizations

Correspondence Schools or Curriculum Suppliers

A Beka Correspondence School/Home Video School/Book Pubs, Pensacola FL 32523-9160, 1-800-874-BEKA
Alpha Omega Publications, PO Box 3153, Tempe AZ 85281, 602-438-2717
Alta Vista College Press Home School Curric, PO Box 222, Medina WA 98039, 206-453-7848
American Home Academy Materials, 2770 S 1000 W, Perry UT 84302
American School, 850 E 58th, Chicago IL 60637 (high school)
Associated Christian Schools, PO Box 27115, Indianapolis IN 46227, 317-881-7132
Brigham Young U-Dept of Independent Study, 206 Harman Continuing Ed Bldg, Provo UT 84602
Calvert School, 105 Tuscany Rd, Baltimore MD 21210
Christian Liberty Academy, 502 W Euclid Ave, Arlington Hts IL 60004
Christian Light Publications, PO Box 1126, Harrisonburg VA 22801-1126, 703-434-0768
Classic Curriculum, Dept G, PO Box 656, Milford MI 48042, 313-481-7008 or 1-800-348-6688
Educators Publishing Service, 75 Moulton St, Cambridge MA 02238
Glenn Distributors, 7251 Bass Hwy, St Cloud MN 32769
Hewitt Research Foundation, PO Box 9, Washougal WA 98671, 206-835-8708
Home Study Alternative School, PO Box 10356, Newport Beach CA 92658
Home Study Directory, Nat'l Home Study Council, 1601 18th St NW, Wash DC 20009
Home Study Institute, 6940 Carroll Ave, Takoma Park MD 20912, 202-723-0800
International Institute, PO Box 99, Park Ridge IL 60068
Kolbe Academy, 1600 E St, Napa CA 94559
Laurel Spring School, PO Box 1440, Ojai 93024
Living Heritage Academy, PO Box 1438, Lewisville TX 75067
McGuffey Academy, 2213 Spur Trail, Grapevine TX 76051, 817-481-7008
The Moore Foundation, Box 1, Camas WA 98607
National Book Co, 333 SW Park Ave, Portland OR 97205-3784, 503-228-6345
Oak Meadow School, PO Box 712, Blacksburg VA 24063, 703-552-3263
Our Lady of Victory School, 4436 E Alpine Dr, Post Falls ID 83854, 208-773-7265
Phoenix Special Programs, 3132 W Clarendon, Phoenix AZ 85017 (high school)
Rod & Staff Publishers, Crockett KY 41413, 606-522-4348
Seton School Home Study, One Kidd Ln, Front Royal VA 22630-3332, 703-636-9990
SMM Educational Services, Box 1079, Sunland CA 91040-818-352-2310
Textbooks for Parents, Box 209, Kendrick ID 83537, 208-276-4721
U of Nebraska Independent Study High School, Continuing Ed Ctr Rm 269, Lincoln NE 68583
Weaver Curriculum, 2752 Scarborough, Riverside CA 92503 (Pre-K-6th, 7-12th supplements)
For high school, college and grad courses, see PETERSON'S INDEPENDENT STUDY CATALOG, available from Holt Associates, 2269 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge MA 02140 for $11.95 + $3 postage.

Helpful Private Schools

Private schools enrolling or helping homeschoolers in various ways (curricula, legal help, support)
Abbott Loop Christian Ctr, 2626 Abbott Rd, Anchorage AK 99507
Abington Academy, 176 Main St, Yarmouthport MA 02675 (Cape Cod only)
Alpha Christian School, Rt 1, Perry KS 66073, 913-597-5822
American Heritage Christian Academy, 9027 Calvine Rd, Sacramento CA 95829, 916-682-2382
Arivaca Community School, PO Box 24, Arivaca AZ 85601
Baldwin Park Christian School, 13940 E Merced, Baldwin Park CA 91706, 916-337-8828
Bay Shore School, PO Box 13038, Long Beach CA 90803, 310-434-3940
Cair Paravel Satellite Schools, 913-272-9721 (KS)
Calumet School, RD 1 Box 95, Smyrna NY 13464
Cascade Canyon School, 459-3464 (San Anselmo, CA)
Christian Chapel Schools, 1920 S Brea Cyn Cut-off Rd, Walnut CA 91789, 714-598-9733
Christian Family Educational Services, PO Box 47159, Phoenix AZ 85068
Clonlara Home Based Education Program, 1289 Jewett St, Ann Arbor MI 48104, 313-769-4515
Cooperative Learning Ctr, 454 Papaya St, Vista CA 92083, 619-726-3020
Dayspring Christian Academy, PO Box 60956, Palo Alto CA 94306
Discovery Christian School, 5547 Alabama Dr, Concord CA 94521, 415-672-5670
EUREKA! Learning Community, Inc., 6 Ridgewood Cir, Wilmington DE 19809
G.A.T.E. School, 1725 N Date #43, Mesa AZ 85201, 969-4821
Grassroots Free School, 2458 Grassroots Way, Tallahassee FL 32301, 904-656-3629
High Meadow, 60 Gatehouse RD, New Paltz NY 12561, 914-255-8842
Home-Centered Learning, PO Box 4643, Whittier CA 90607, 310-696-4696
Independence Private School, c/o Principal M. Black, 45 Albert St North, Orilla, ONT L3V 5K3, Canada
The Learning Community, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia MD 21045, 410-730-0073
The Learning Community, Inc, PO Box 5177, Herndon VA 22070
Little Piney School, Rt 1 Box 20, Newburg MO 65550
Little Red Home School, 9669 E 123rd, Hastings MN 55033, 437-3049
Magic Meadow School, PO Box 29, N San Juan CA 95960
Meter Schools, PO Box 427, Rosharon TX 77583
Morning Glory Private School, PO Box 20, Ft White FL 32028
Mount Vernon Academy, 184 Vine St, Murray UT 84107
Mt Carmel Academy, RD 1 Box 1737, Waterville VT 05492
Muncie Christian School, 230 S 65th, Kansas City MO 66111, 913-788-3018
North Long Beach Calvary Chapel, 132 E Artesia Blvd, Long Beach CA 90805, 213-428-5166
Pilgrim Christian School, 3759 E 57th St, Maywood CA 90270, 213-585-3167
Pilgrim School, 531 N Balna, Porterville CA 93257, 209-782-0402
Pinewood School, 112 Road D, Pine CO 80470, 303-838-4418
Pittsburgh Urban Christian Coal. School, 412-322-8324 (PA)
Rocky Mountain High Academy, PO Box 418, Flora Vista NM 87415
Saddleback Valley Ctr, Box 912, El Toro CA 92630, 714-855-8003
Santa Fe Community School, PO Box 2241, Santa Fe NM 87501, 505-471-6928

Seedling, c/o Joy Reiter, 69 Sanderson Crescent, Richmond Hill Ontario L4C 5L5, Canada
Sidney Ledson School, 33 Overland Dr, Don Mills, Ont, Canada M3C 2C3, 416 447 5355
Snohomish County Christian School, 1215 Olympic Ave, Edmonds WA 98020, 206 771 1793
Stonemoor Hills School, 3 Stonemoor Dr, Pueblo CO 81005, 303 561 3510
Summit Christian Academy, 13789 Noel Rd, Suite 100, Dallas TX 75240
Sycamore Tree, 2179 Meyer Pl, Costa Mesa CA 92627, 714 650 4466
TEACH, 4350 Lakeland Ave, N Robbinsdale MN 55422
Upattinas School, 429 Greenridge Rd, Glenmoore PA 19343, 215 458 5138

Homeschooling Organizations

Some of these groups are statewide (look for the state name in the group's title as an indication) and are likely to have information about state laws or regulations, and may have conferences and packets of information for new homeschoolers. Other groups are local support groups that are likely to have meetings and activities. Both state and local groups may have newsletters. Try getting in touch with a state group even if it's far away from where you live; many state groups can refer you to families, or smaller support groups, in your immediate area.

State or Local Groups: (alphabetically by state):

AL Alabama Home Educators, PO Box 16091, Mobile 36116
Alabama Home Educators - Tuscaloosa Area, Rt 3 Box 633, Cottondale 35453
East Lake UMC Academy, 1603 Great Pine Rd, Birmingham 35235 (cover school)
Homeschool Advocates, 5962 Chalet Dr North, Mobile 36608, 205 344 3239
AK Alaska Homeschool Assoc, PO Box 874075, Wasilla 99687, 907 373 7404
AZ Arizona Families for Home Education, 639 E Kino Dr, Mesa 85203, 964 7435
Bethany Home Educators, 2720 S Flint Cir, Mesa 85202
Home School Supplies, 1125 E Quick Draw Pl, Tucson 85749
Parents Assoc of Christian Home Schools, 6166 W Highland, Phoenix 85033
Phoenix Learning Alternatives Network, 8835 N 47th Pl, Phoenix 85028, 602 483 3381
SPICE, 10414 W Mulberry Dr, Phoenix 85039
AR Arkansas Christian Home Education Assoc, PO Box 501, Little Rock 72203, 501 753 9164
CA Bakersfield Open Support Grp, 805 836 3454
California Coalition - PALS, PO Box 92, Escondido 92025, 619 749 1522
Center for Educational Guidance, PO Box 445, N San Juan 95960, 916 292 3623
Children and Community Network, c/o Lynne Knowles, 14556 Little Greenhorn Rd, Grass Valley 95945
Christian Family Schools, PO Box 23068, San Jose 95153 3068
Christian Home Educators of CA, PO Box 28644, Santa Ana 92799 8644, 714 537 5121
Community Education Gazette, PO Box 445, N San Juan 95960
Esparto Homeschoolers, PO Box 305, Esparto 95627, 916 787 3613
Home School Assoc of CA (formerly Northern CA Homeschool Assoc), PO Box 231236, Sacramento 95823 0403, 707 765 5375
Mountain View Park Homeschoolers, 6603 Mammoth Av, Van Nuys 91405 4813
North Santa Clara Valley Homeschoolers, 795 Sheraton Dr, Sunnyvale 94087
Peninsula Homeschoolers, 4795 Lage Dr, San Jose 95130, 408 379 6835
Riverside Area Home Learners, c/o Gibson, 13171 Spur Branch Cir, Corona 91719, 909 245 0902
San Diego Homeschoolers, 3581 Mt Aclare Ave, San Diego 92111
School of Home Learning Support Group, 1904 Flora Vista St, Needles 92363 619 326 2107
Sonoma County Homeschoolers, 8600 Templeman Rd, Forestville 95436
South St Centre, Box 261, Boulder Creek 95006 (resource ctr for families)
South Valley Homeschoolers Assn, Box 961, San Martin 95046
SPICE, c/o PO Box 282, Wilton 95693
W. San Fernando Valley Playgrp, c/o Brecht, 20555 Dumont St, Woodland Hills 91364, 818 888 2480
Wildflower Homeschoolers, 4572 El Dorado Ct, Pleasanton 94566, 415 462 9516
Yosemite Area Homeschoolers, PO Box 74, Midpines 95345
CO Boulder County Home Educators, 1150 Monroe Dr #D, Boulder 80303, 546 0278 or 581 9605
Colorado Home Educators' Assoc, 303 650 8833
Colorado Home Schooling Network, 7490 W Apache, Sedalia 80135, 303 688 4136
Colorado Springs Homeschoolers, 2906 Marilyn Rd, Colorado Springs 80909, 719 598 8444
Home Educators for Excellence of Durango, c/o Haratyc, 11 Animas Pl, Durango 81301, 303 247 2675
Independent Network of Creative Homeschoolers, c/o Woodhouse, 724 Victor St, Aurora 80011, 303 340 3185, 303 751 6421
Northern Colorado Home School Assoc, c/o Michalak, 12150 Rist Canyon Rd, Bellvue 80512, 303 493 2243
Unschoolers Family Support Grp, 5315 Landgan St, Colorado Spgs 80919
CT Connecticut Home Educators Assoc, 63 Spindrift Ln, Guilford CT 06437, 203 457 1642
DE Tri State Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 7193, Newark 19714 7193

States FL - MI

FL ABC Homeschool Cooperative, c/o Joyce Bussell, 1140 NE Town Terr, Jensen Beach 34957, 407 334 2083
Family Learning Exchange, 2020 Turpentine Rd, Mims 32754
Florida Assoc for Schools at Home, 1000 Devil's Dip, Tallahassee 32308, 878 2793
Florida Parent-Educators Assoc, 20051 Quesada Ave, Port Charlotte 33952
Parkland Home Educators, 2111 Oakhurst Av, Winter Park 32792, 407 679 6890, 657 7560
GA Atlanta Alternative Education Network, c/o Paynter, 1158 McConnell Dr, Decatur 30033
Cobb County Homeschoolers, 813 Wyntuck Dr, Kennesaw 30144
Free to Learn at Home, 4439 Lake Forest Dr, Oakwood 30566, 404 536 8077
Georgians for Freedom in Education, 209 Cobb St, Palmetto 30268, 404 463 3719
North Side Atlanta Homeschoolers, c/o Jane Kelly, 4141 Wieuca, Atlanta 30342
REACH, c/o Vicki Scott, 617 Colony Ct, Woodstock 30188
HI Christian Homeschoolers of Hawaii, 910824 Oama St, Ewa Beach 96706, 689 6398
Friends Learning at Home, PO Box 3476, Mililani 96789
Hawaii Island Home Educators, 968 8076 or 965 9002
Hawaii Homeschool Assn, 66960 Kuewa Dr, Waialua 96791
Maui Home Educators, 777 Kolani St, Wailuku 96793, 808 242 8225
The Tropical Homeschooler (newsletter), c/o Pinsky, 220 Waipahani Rd, Haiku, Maui 96708, 808 572 9289
IA Iowa Families for Christian Education, RR 3 Box 143, Missouri Valley 51555
Iowa Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 213, Des Moines 50301
ID Home Educators of Idaho, 3618 Pine Hill Dr, Coeur d'Alene 83814, 208 667 2778
Idaho Home Educators, PO Box 4022, Boise 83711 4022, 208 482 7336
IL Evanston Home Educators, 9214 Harding Av, Evanston 60203, 708 676 3855
HOUSE, c/o Wasserman, 806 Oakton, Evanston 60202 (statewide)
Illinois Christian Home Educators, PO Box 261, Zion 60099
IN LEARN, 7633 Shilo Rd, Unionville 47468 (Bloomington area)
Southern IN Support Group, 118 E Water St, Princeton 47670, 812 385 4176
Wabash Valley Homeschool Assoc, c/o Palmer, 2515 E Quinn Av, Terre Haute 47805, 812 466 9467
KS Christian Home Educators Confederation of Kansas, PO Box 3564, Shawnee Mission 66203
Hesston/Canton Home Educators Assoc, 316 367 8205
Lawrence Area Unaffiliated Grp of Homeschoolers, c/o Michener, RR 1 Box 496, Perry 66073
Manhattan Parent Educators, 913 539 3641
Teaching Parents Assoc, PO Box 3968, Wichita 67201, 316 945 0810
KY Kentucky Home Education Assoc, PO Box 81, Winchester 40392 0081
LA Home Educators Network, 59126 Thompson Rd, Slidell 70460
Louisiana Citizens for Home Education, 3404 Van Buren, Baker 70714, 504 775 5472
Southwest Acadiana Homeschoolers, 507 S. Arenas, Ravne 70578, 318 334 2812
ME Maine Homeschool Association, PO Box 9715-199, Portland 04104
Peninsula Area Homeschooling Assoc, PO Box 235, Deer Isle 04627
Sebago Lake Homeschoolers Support Grp, RR 2 Box 54, Sebago Lake 04075, 207 642 4368
Southern Maine Home Education Support Grp, 25 Belmeade Rd, Portland 04101, 207 774 7053
MD Maryland Home Education Assoc, 9085 Hanepool Way, Columbia 21045, 410 730 0073
Montgomery Co Support Group, 26821 Howard Chapel Dr, Damascus 20872 1247, 301 253 5467
North County Home Educators, 303 Royale Dr, Baltimore 21229
Parents for Home Education, 13020 Blairmore St, Beltsville 20705, 301 572 5827
MA Apple Country Homeschooling Assoc, PO Box 246, Harvard 01451, 508 456 8515
Berkshire Homeschoolers Grp, 217 Old State Rd, Berkshire 01224, 413 443 1770
Cape Ann Homeschoolers, 6 Emily Ln, Magnolia 01930
Franklin Co Families for Home Ed, 413 625 6566
Greater Boston Home Educators, 617 246 2059 (Wakefield)
Home Education Resource Ctr, 505 East St, Pittsfield 01201, 413 684 2346
Homeschoolers of Mass. Education Club (Boston area), 60 Parkway Rd, Newton02160, 617 489 3275
Kitchen School Group, PO Box 96, W Boxford 01885, 617 352 2023
Mass. Home Learning Assoc, PO Box 1976, Lenox 01240, 413 637 2169
Metro West Homeschoolers, 25 Carter Dr, Framingham 01701, 508 877 6536
North Shore Support Grp, 508 468 4663 or 508 658 8970
South Shore Homeschoolers, 87 Snell Av, Brockton 02402, 508 588 1529
Worcester Area Homeschooling Organization, 246 May St #2, Worcester 01602, 617 755 9553
MI Bay City Homeschooling Support Grp, 517 893 7608
Benzie Home Educators, PO Box 208, Benzonia 49616
Heritage Home Educators, 2122 Houser Rd, Holly 48442
Information Network for Christian Homes, 4150 Ambrose NE, Grand Rapids 49505

States MI - NC

Learning Tree Resource Center, Box 80 B S Superior Rd RR 1, Atlantic Mine 49905 906 482 6393

Sunnyridge Alternative Learning Ctr, HCO 1 Box 134, Pelkie 49958

MN Families Nurturing Lifelong Learners, 2452 Southcrest Av, Maplewood 55119

Fargo-Moorehead Homeschool Assoc, 1909 8th St S, Moorehead 56560

Home-Based Educators Accrediting Assoc, Rt 1 Box 381, Cambridge 55008

Minnesota Homeschool Alliance, PO Box 23072, Richfield 55423, 612 491 2828

Minnesota Home School Network, 9669 E 123rd, Hastings 55033, 612 437 3049

South Metro Families for Home Education, 17020 Hamilton Dr, Lakeville 55044

MS Home Educators of Central Mississippi, c/o McDonald, 109 W Willow Ct, Ridgeland 39157, 601 366 9218

MO Families for Home Education, 4400 Woods Rd, Sibley 64088

Home Schooling Network, 47 Clermont Ln, St Louis 63124

Ozark LORE Society, c/o Eisenmann, HC 73 Box 160, Drury 65638, 417 679 4391 (Ozark area grp)

Springfield Area Homeschoolers, Rt 1 Box 193, Fair Grove 65648

St Louis South County Support Group, 601 Madison, Arnold 63010

MT Flathead Valley Homeschoolers Assn, Kalispell, 892 4052, 755 2036

The Grapevine (Montana Homeschool News), 1702 Hwy 83 North, Seeley Lake 59868, 406 754 2481

Homeschoolers of Montana, PO Box 654, Helena 59624 0654

Montana Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 95, UM MT 59485 0095

NE LEARN, 7741 E Avon Ln, Lincoln 68505, 402 488 7741

Nebraska Indep. Homeschoolers Network, 8010 Lillibridge St, Lincoln 68506

Omaha Project for Education and Nurturing, 7930 Raven Oaks Dr, Omaha 68152

OPEN, 7930 Raven Oaks Dr, Omaha 68152, 402 572 8515

Prairie Christian Home Schools, Rt 3 Box 73, Ord 68862

NV Home Schools United/Vegas Valley, PO Box 26811, Las Vegas 89126, 702 870 9566

Parent Activists Committed to Education, PO Box 13587, Las Vegas 89112, 702 457 1509

NH New Hampshire Alliance for Home Education, 16 Winter Circle, Manchester 03103

New Hampshire Home School Coalition, PO Box 2224, Concord 03302

New Hampshire Home Schools Newsletter, PO Box 97, Center Tuftonboro 03816

Support Alternative Family Education, 68 Forrest St, Unit 6B, Plaistow 03865, 603 382 3815

NJ Families Learning Together, 11 Bates Rd, Jackson 08527, 201 367 5012

Homeschoolers of South Jersey, Rt 2 Burnt House Rd, Vincentown 08088

Jersey Shore Christian Homeschoolers Assoc, 65 Middlesex Rd, Matawan 07747 3030

NJ Family Schools Assoc, RD 3 Box 208, Washington 07882

North Jersey Home Schoolers Assoc, 44 Oak St, Hillsdale 07642, 201 666 6025

Roots and Wings, RD 4 Box 126E, Boonton Twp 07005

Sussex County Home Education Organization, 875 6178

The Tutor, 1239 Whitaker Av, Millville 08332, 609 825 4770

Unschoolers Network, 2 Smith St, Farmingdale 07727, 908 938 2473 (statewide)

Unschooling Fams. Support Grp of Central NJ, RD 1 Box 713, Jobston 08041, 609 723 1524

NM Glorieta Family Educators, Star Rt 1 Box 404, Glorieta 87535

New Mexico Family Educators, PO Box 92276, Albuquerque 87199 2276

NM Christian Home Education, 7417 Santa Fe Trail NW, Albuquerque 87120

Santa Fe Learning Cooperative, 2463 Camino Capitan, Santa Fe, 87505

NY Albany Area Homeschoolers, 46 Pershing Dr, Scotia 12302, 518 346 3413

Families for Home Education, 5458 Oxbow Rd, Cazenovia 13035

Fingerlakes Unschoolers Network, 249 Coddington Rd, Ithaca 14850, 607 277 6300

Home Education Exchange of the Southern Tier, RD 2 Box 244, Grippen Hill Rd, Vestal 13850

Homeschoolers Network of the Mid-Hudson Valley, RD 2 Box 211P, Ski Run Rd, Bloomingburg NY 12721, 914 733 1002

Long Island Homeschoolers Assoc, 4 Seville Pl, Massapequa Park 11762, 516 795 5554

Loving Education At Home, PO Box 332, Syracuse 13205 0332, 518 337 6019

New York City Home Educators Alliance, c/o Theresa Morris, 341 E 5th St, New York 10003, 212 505 9884

NY State Home Education News, PO Box 59, E Chatham 12060, 518 392 6800 (legal news)

Rochester Area Homeschoolers Assoc, 275 Yarmouth Rd, Rochester 14610, 716 271 0845

Tri-County Homeschoolers, 130 Blanchard Rd, Stonepoint 10980, 914 429 5156

NC Families Learning Together, 1724 Azalea Dr, Wilmington 28405 (also statewide)

The Home Education Association, 300 Brown Cir, Rolesville 27571, 919 554 1563

States NC - WA

North Carolinians for Home Education, 419 N Boylan Av, Raleigh 27603 1211, 919 834 NCHE

ND North Dakota Home School Assoc, PO Box 486, Mandan 58554, 701 448 9193 or 448 2602

OH Alternative Learning Network, 1144 Koons Rd, N Canton 44720

Christian Home Educators of Ohio, PO Box 1224, Kent 44240

Christian Parents Assoc, 310 Bluebonnet Dr, Findlay 45840 (local only)

Growing Together, c/o Nancy McKibben 1676 Trendrif Ct, Columbus 43229

Home-Based Education League of Parents, see National/General Group. Also has Ohio info

Home School Network of Greater Cincinnati, 642 Romohr Acres, Cincinnati 45244, 732 6355

Home School Resource Ctr, 1444 Gurley Ave, Akron 44310, 216 633 3160

Ohio Home Educators Network, PO Box 23054, Chagrin Falls 44023 0054, 216 543 5644

OK Cornerstone, 1148 S Owasso Av, Tulsa 74120

The Family Learning Connection, PO Box 1938, Durant 74702

Learning All Ways, 7 Canyon Oaks Dr, McLoud 74851, 405 598 5979

OK Central Home Educators Consociation, PO Box 270601, OKC 73137

Oklahoma Christian Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 471032, Tulsa 74147 1032

OR Avalos Learning Center, PO Box 70778, Eugene 97401

Douglas County Homeschoolers Connection, 4053 Hanna St, Roseburg 97470

Homeschoolers of Lane County, 38040 Pengra Rd, Fall Creek 97438, 503 937 2271

Homeschool Political Action Committee and **Homeschool Chautauqua**, 5360 SW 192 Av, Aloha 97007, 503 649 1110

The Learning Connection, PO Box 1091 #196, Grants Pass 97526, 503 476 5686

Mid-Valley Secular Homeschoolers (Salem area), 503 362 1203

Oregon Home Education Network, 4470 SW Hall Blvd #286, Beaverton 97005, 503 321 5166

Parents Education Assoc, PO Box 1482, Beaverton 97075, 503 645 3709

People Assisting the Challenge of Home Study, c/o Craig, 22215 SW Jaquith Rd, Newberg 97132

Willamette Homeschoolers, 245 W 27th Av, Eugene 97405

PA Chester County Homeschoolers, PO Box C, Paoli 19301

Endless Mountains Homeschoolers (N Central PA), c/o Kellogg, RD 3 Box 80, Columbia Cross Rds 16914, 717 549 8179

Pennsylvania Home Education Network, 285 Allegheny St, Meadville 16335, 412 265 2734

Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, RD 2 Box 117, Kittanning 16201, 412 783 6512

RI Home Spun News, 4 Sherwood Av, Warwick 02888, 401 781 5977

Parent Educators of RI, PO Box 782, Glendale 02826

RI Guild of Home Teachers, 272 Pequot Av, Warwick 02886, 401 737 2265

Rhode Islanders for Constitutional Education, 1 Solar St, Providence 02903, 401 861 9685

SC Carolina Family School Assoc, 3200 Fernandina Rd #103F, Columbia 29210 5245

SD South Dakota Home School Assoc, PO Box 882, Sioux Falls 57101

TN Home Education Assoc of Tenn (HEAT), 3677 Richbriar Ct, Nashville 37211

Homeschooling Families, 214 Park Ln, Oliver Springs 37840 (also statewide)

TX Austin Area Homeschoolers, 6502 Bradley Dr, Austin 78723

Family Home Educators of Dallas, 214 840 8342

Home-Oriented Private Education for Texas, PO Box 43887, Austin 78745 0018, 512 280 4673

Houston Alternative Education Alliance, 12811 Ivy Forest Dr, Cypress 77429

North Texas Self-Schoolers, c/o Jordan, 150 Forest Ln, Double Oak/Lewisville 75067, 817 430 4835

Texas Homeschool Coalition, 800 797 4927

UT FCLA Utah Spice Group, 1510 W 500 N, Provo 84601, 801 377 4728

Utah Home Education Association, PO Box 50565, Provo 84605 0565, 801 535 1533 or 342 4027

VT Christian Home Educators of VT, c/o Walker, 2 Webster Av, Barre 05641

Life is Valuable Education, RR 2 Box 2891, St Albans 05478, 802 527 1674

Vermont Homeschoolers Assoc, 179 Spruce Knob, Middletown Spgs 05757

VA Blue Ridge Area Network for Congenial Homeschoolers (BRANCH), Rt 3 Box 602, Afton 22920, 703 456 9822

Community of Independent Learners, PO Box 16029, Alexandria 22302, 703 998 9626

Home Educators Assoc of VA, PO Box 1810, Front Royal 22630 1810, 703 635 9322

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Home Instruction Support Group, 217 Willow Terr, Sterling 22170

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Richmond Educational Alternatives for Children at Home, 3403 Hawthorne Av, Richmond 23222

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Family Academy, 146 SW 153rd #290, Seattle 98166

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Whatcom Homeschool Assoc. 595 Trout Lake Rd. Bellingham 98226
WV Alternatives in Education. Rt 3 Box 305. Chloe 25235. 304 655-7232
Christian Home Educators of West VA. PO Box 266. Glenville 26351. 304 462-8296
West VA Home Educators Assoc. PO Box 3707. Charleston 25337-3707. 304 733-4735
WI Families in Schools at Home (FISH). 4639 Conestoga Trail. Cottage Grove 53527
HOME (Madison Chapter). 5745 Bittersweet Pl. Madison 53705. 608 238-3302
Unschooling Families. 1908 N. Clark St. Appleton 54911. 414 735-9832
Wisconsin Parents Assoc. PO Box 2502. Madison 53701
WY Wyoming Homeschoolers. Box 1386. Lyman 82937
Unschoolers of Wyoming. 429 Hwy 230. #20. Laramie 82070

National or General Homeschool Groups:

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Basic Education. PO Box 610589. D/FW Airport TX 75261. 214 462-1969
Catholic Home School Newsletter. 688 11th Ave NW. New Brighton MN 55112
Christian Life Workshops. 180 SE Kane Ave. Gresham OR 97030
Creative Learning Magazine. 473 Billy Mitchell Rd #3. San Antonio TX 78225-1820
The Drinking Gourd (homeschoolers of color). PO Box 2557. Redmond WA 98073
Family Centered Learning Alternatives. HCR 63 Box 713. Naselle WA 98638. 206 484-3252
Holt Associates/Growing Without Schooling. 2269 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge MA 02140
Home-Based Education League of Parents. Suite 131. 3208 Cahuenga Blvd West. Los Angeles CA 90068. 1 800 582-9061
Home Education Press. PO Box 1083. Tonasket WA 98855. 509 486-1351
Home Education Workshops. Homesteading School. RD 2 GW. Oxford NY 13830
Home Educators Computer Users Group. 26824 Howard Chapel Dr. Damascus MD 20872-1247. 301 253-5467
Home School Gazette. PO Box 359. Burtonsville MD 20866. 301 421-1473
Home School Legal Defense Assoc. PO Box 159. Paeonian Springs VA 22129. 703 338-5600
Home School Researcher. Western Baptist College. 5000 Deer Park Dr SE. Salem OR 97301-9392
Homeschool Associates of New England. 116 Third Av. Auburn ME 04210. 207 777-0077
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Homeschoolers Travel Network. NHA. PO Box 290. Hartland MI 48353-0290. 513 772-9580
Islamic Homeschool Assoc of North America. 1312 Plymouth Ct. Raleigh NC 27610
Jewish Home Educators Newsletter. c/o Ernstoff. 2 Webb Rd. Sharon MA 02067
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Nat'l Homeschool Service. PO Box 167. Rodeo NM 88056. 505 557-2250
Nat'l Institute for Christian Home Education. Rt 3 Box 543. Rustburg VA 24588
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The Teaching Home. PO Box 20219. Portland OR 97220-0219
Umoja*Unidad*Unity (Homeschoolers of Color). 5621 S. Lakeshore Dr. Idlewild MI 49642

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Canada:

Alberta Home Education Assoc. c/o Attn: Stasiewich. Box 3451. Lethc AB T9E 6M2
Calgary Home Eds Encouragement & Resource Society. RR 6. Calgary AB T2M 4L5
Canadian Alliance of Homeschoolers. Box 684. Stn P. Toronto. Ontario M5S 2Y4
Canadian Home Educators Assoc of BC. 4684 Darin Ct. Kelowna BC V1W 2B3. 604 764-7462
Cowichan Valley Homelearners Support Grp. RR 7. Duncan BC V9L 4W4
Cowichan Valley Christian Homelearners Support Grp. 1050 Marchmont Rd. Duncan BC V9L 2M7
Education Advisory. 2267 Kings Ave. W Vancouver BC V7V 2C1
Gabriola Homeschoolers. PO Box 223. Gabriola Island BC V0R 1X0
Greater Vancouver Home Learners Support Grp. 604 228-1939; 604 298-6710
Home Education News. Box 39009 Pt Grey RPO. Vancouver BC V6R 4P1
Home Learning Resource Centre. Box 61. Quathiaski BC V0P 1N0
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Manitoba Assoc for Schooling at Home. 89 Edkar Cres. Winnipeg R2G 3H8
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Nova Scotia Support Grp. c/o Laura Uhlman RR 1. Pleasantville NS B0R 1G0
Ontario Homeschoolers. Box 60. 260 Adelaide St E. Toronto M5A 1N0
Orilla Homeschoolers' Support Grp. 45 Albert St North. Orilla Ont L3V 5K3
Quebec Homeschooling Advisory. CP 1278. 1002 Rosemarie. Val David J0T 2N0
Rideau Valley Home Educators Assoc. c/o Dubuc. 1144 Byron Av. Ottawa K2B 6T4. 613 729-0117
Saskatchewan Home-Based Educators. 116A Idylwyld Dr. N. suite 13. Saskatoon SK S7L 0Y7
Victoria Home Learning Network. 106 290 Regina. Victoria. BC V8Z 6S6
Villa Villekula. 1250 Gladstone Av. Windsor. Ont. N8X 3H3. 519 254-3593
Yukon Home Educators' Society. 8 Normandy Rd. Whitehorse YT Y1A 3C5

Elsewhere:

Accelerated Christian Education. PO Box 10. Strathpine. Qld. Australia. 07 205-7503
Alternative Education Resource Group. 39 William St. Hawthorne. Victoria. 3122. Melbourne. Australia
Aprender Sin Escuela. Apartado 28198. Madrid 28080. Spain. (91) 528 01 07
Brisbane Homeschooling Group. Lot 2. Caboolture River Rd. Upper Caboolture 4510 Australia
Canberra Home Education Network. 23 Bardolph St. Bonython. ACT 2905. Australia
Education Otherwise. 36 Kinross St. Leamington Spa. Warks. UK CV32 7EF. 09261 86828
Homeschoolers Australia Pty Ltd. PO Box 420. Kellyville 2153. NSW Australia
Les Enfants D'Abord. 18 Grde Rue. Valence 26000. France
NSW Central Coast Homeschool Grp. RMB 6346. MacDonalds Rd. Lisarow NSW 2250. Australia
The New Zealand Home Schooling Assoc. 5 Phanet Av. Mt Albert. Auckland. New Zealand
Panama Support Group. PSC Box 1578. APO Miami. Florida 34001 (Ft Amador. Panama)
Puerto Rico Homeschooling Assoc. 503 Barbe St. Santurce 00912 Puerto Rico
Sunshine Coast Homeschooling Grp. #40 Browns Rd. Belli Park via Edmundi. 4562 Queensland. Australia
World-Wide Educational Service. Strode House. 44/50 Osnaburgh St. London NW1 3NN England
Yarra Valley Homeschoolers. 9 Salisbury St. Warburton. Australia

Other Organizations:

These educational, child raising, or self reliance organizations are good sources of help and allies. Again, a SASE is appreciated.
Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education. PO Box 59. E Chatham NY 12060-0059. 518 392-6900
Alternative Education Resource Organization. 417 Roslyn Rd. Roslyn Hghts NY 11577. 516 621-2195
EVAN-G. 977 Keeler Ave. Berkeley CA 94708 (corporal punishment)
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Liedloff Continuum Network. White Elephant. 6 Issaquah. Waldo Pt. Harbor Sausalito CA 94965. 415 332-1570 (people interested in the Continuum Concept)
Nat'l Assoc for the Legal Support of Alt. Schools. PO Box 2823. Santa Fe NM 87501. 505 471-6928
National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest). 342 Broadway. Cambridge MA 02139. 617 864-1410
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Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. Camisse NITKOWSIK (16) 1608 Upper Gold Ct. Sandpoint ID 83864; fiber arts, gardening, animals ••• Nathaniel DAUGHT (9) PO Box 33, Mather MN R0K L10, Canada; Star Trek, art, computers ••• Michael REED (5) 2610 W Mclellan #5, Phoenix AZ 85017; dinosaurs, Legos, art ••• Julia BRION (9) 8 Mary Bee Ln, Sherman CT 06784; reading, writing, animals ••• Jes SEAVER (13) 797 Oneta Dr, Norcross GA 30093; herbs, nature, New Age ••• Alison SCHROTH (12) Box 250, Cobalt CT 06414 ••• Brandt SMITH (9) Rt 2 Box 358B, Westfield NC 27053; drawing, animals, building ••• Jasmine WALKER (10) 9383 Ace Rd, Hemlock NY 14466; reading, games, arts & crafts ••• Caitlin BERRY (8) 2949 Willow Rd, Homewood IL 60430; piano, jazz dancing ••• Ashley HUNT (12) 542 E Farriss Av, High Pt NC 27262; horses, art, history

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Jan./Feb. 1994

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

Issue 97

When Kids Ask to Homeschool

Work and Financial Arrangements

Russian Homeschoolers

Schooling + Diplomas = Jobs?

Homeschool Sports Teams — See p. 8

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Contents

News & Reports p. 4-7

Russian Homeschoolers, Challenging the Learning Disability Label, Satellite Town Meetings

Homeschool Sports Teams p. 8-9

How homeschool groups have formed their own sports teams in Pennsylvania and Colorado

Challenges & Concerns p. 10-13

Parents write about financial and work arrangements that make homeschooling possible

Watching Children Learn p. 14-23

Schedules, Math, Volunteer Work, Beginning Homeschooling at 14, Finding Friends for Young Children, Explaining Homeschooling to Colleges

FOCUS: When Kids Ask to Homeschool p. 24-29

Interviews with two teenagers and their mothers

Neither School Nor Home p. 30-31

When school is frustrating and home is unhealthy — finding a third alternative

Schooling + Diplomas = Jobs? p. 32-33

Do school credentials really lead to better jobs?

Resources & Recommendations p. 34

Book Reviews p. 39-40

Issue #97
Jan. Feb. 1994

GWS

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by John Holt

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Welcome to the newly designed GWS! As we said in our last issue, our new design doesn't reflect a change in our philosophy; rather, it is our hope that the magazine will now be more readable and accessible. We hope our regular readers will appreciate this, and we also hope to reach new readers.

When we consider how homeschooling has grown since we published our first issue in 1977, it is nothing short of inspirational. Homeschoolers now make up a sizable portion of the total private school population. Of the five and a half million children attending private schools in 1988 (the most recent year for which we could find a number), at least 350,000 of them were homeschooling. Now, in 1994, it is safe to say that at least half a million children are being homeschooled, and even that is a conservative estimate.

Homeschooling doesn't require professional accreditation or curricula aimed at motivating children to behave in certain ways and learn at certain ages. Homeschoolers are not merely creating a system that parallels schooling; rather, we are about growing *without* schooling and with a very different approach to raising children. Homeschooling, as we see it, is not about making children into what educators, the government, or even, some would say, their parents dictate. It is about helping children to make something of themselves.

Perhaps this is why it's so hard for people to understand what homeschooling is really like or where its real significance lies. The alternative nature of homeschooling, and the fact that there is no one right way to practice it, confuses and maybe even scares people who assume that the way they were raised must be the only way. But as the parents in this issue's Focus make clear, initial fears about homeschooling can be calmed and initial opinions can be changed. This is true for parents, like those in this issue's Focus, who ultimately become homeschooling parents, and it is also true for people who may never homeschool — other parents, other people who deal with children — but who can learn from what homeschoolers know. Homeschooling is about relating to children as people, not as educational clients or textbook cases; it is about *not* separating living from learning, morality from intellect, citizenship from activism. It is about realizing that what we decide to do in our own lives can change others' beliefs about what is possible.

Spreading these ideas, and exploring them more thoroughly with the people who are already familiar with them, is the primary work of GWS. We hope that our new format will help bring these messages to a wider audience and create a perception that homeschooling is not just for "certain families," that it has something important to offer everyone.

Pat Farenga Susannah Sheffer

Many adults remember being bored or frustrated in high school, staring out the classroom window and thinking that there must be a better way to spend these years. But can we imagine what it would have been like to hear, through a news story, a neighbor, or another teenager, that there *was* a better way – that it really was possible to leave school without jeopardizing our entire futures?

This is what teenagers now have the possibility of hearing. Largely because of Grace Llewellyn's *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, but also because of the increasing likelihood that a teenager will have seen an article about homeschooling or heard someone mention it, we are hearing more and more from kids who are their family's homeschooling advocates and initiators. Years ago, it was almost without exception the parents who decided to homeschool. When kids are the ones who bring up the idea, new strengths, but also new conflicts, can arise.

Teenagers who initiate homeschooling are often especially self-motivated - doing the legal research on their own, carefully articulating their reasons for wanting to leave school, drawing up plans for the future. They need less direct parental involvement than younger kids do, and yet for emotional and practical reasons they usually prefer to leave school with their parents' approval and support. So teenagers in this situation have to work to convince their parents that homeschooling would be viable.

For this issue's Focus we interviewed two teenagers who asked to homeschool and the parents who had to respond to the request. Many of the issues that arose in these families are common in this situation: the parents' concern about whether they will have to give up their own pursuits; the immense help that experienced homeschoolers can be to newcomers with questions and fears; the need for people who deal with teenagers (like counselors and psychologists) to be aware of homeschooling as an option; the fact that taking teenagers seriously and actually letting them leave school is a radical act. Parents who support their kids in these cases are swimming against the tide of public opinion that says, "Make school-phobic kids go to school!" and "Don't let your teenager boss you around!"

I once talked to a girl who very much wanted to leave school but whose parents kept telling her, "Maybe if you start getting better grades in school, we'll let you try homeschooling." The girl felt that she wasn't getting good grades in school because she couldn't learn well in that environment, but her parents' logic made it impossible for her to show them that she could learn better another way. It may seem sensible that anything that *takes* self-discipline should only be done by someone who *has* self-discipline already. But kids who don't do well in school may do much better outside of school, and if their right to homeschool is contingent on their track record in school, they may never get a chance demonstrate this. Teenagers who ask to homeschool are asking of their parents what for years homeschooling parents asked of school officials or state legislatures: "Give me a chance to try something different."

— Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

Russian Homeschoolers

Natasha Bondachenkova writes from Russia:

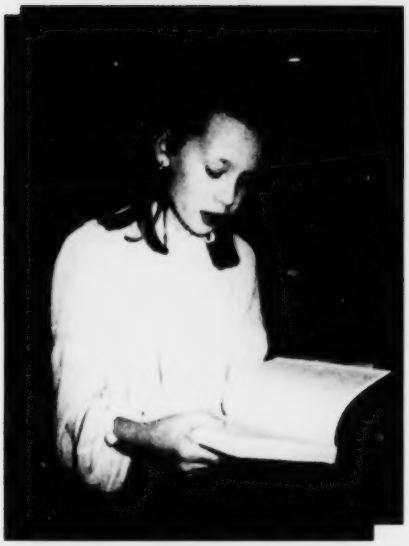
There are two children in our family, Maxim, the boy, is 29, and Natasha, the girl, is 12. When Maxim was born, my husband and I did not think much about the problem of his upbringing. When he was one year old, he went to the day nursery and I went to work. It's only natural that he cried, as he didn't want to stay in the nursery. I had to tear his hands off of me and leave him crying. It was a great shock for both of us. As a matter of fact, in most of our nurseries and schools, the atmosphere is very much like this.

When Natasha was born, the situation appeared to be quite different. The doctors diagnosed a serious pathology: undeveloped coxofemoral joints and a congenital myocardiasclerosis. For nine months, Natasha had to be immobile. Her heart failed to develop, too. She was very weak.

We wanted to help our daughter, so we decided to adopt the methods of people who had faced similar problems. We knew about these people from the press. First, we learned about Igor Charkovsky, who had developed the swimming system for children. Kids who were born prematurely, who were weakened and lacking vitality, and who trained according to this system, caught up with their healthy peers and sometimes left them behind. The system stimulated mental abilities, too. So 1-year-old Natasha was accustomed to the swimming pool, which she enjoyed very much.

Second, we learned about an engineer named Skrinalvov. He had invented a sports complex consisting of eight apparatus and occupying two square meters. The exercises children do on this complex are like games, and they don't get tired of them because they are playing. The complex allows the kids to change the apparatus, to whirl, to swing on and climb up the rope. My husband used Skrinalvov's drafts and made such a complex, and we put it in the children's room. Our kids spent all their time there, and as a result Natasha, who at 1 was not yet able to walk, could climb a rope ladder two meters high.

Then, it was the Nikitin family who suggested a new conception of child development and upbringing. According to their philosophy, from the day of his birth the child should be talked to, must listen to nice music,



Natasha Bondarchenkova (junior) at 9 years old.

see beautiful pictures, hear several foreign languages, be shown letters and numbers. The Nikitins also suggested a number of games for developing the child's creative abilities.

We learned about this system when Natasha was eight months old, and we realized immediately that it was just what we needed. We could not follow all the recommendations as we didn't know any foreign languages and didn't have any paintings, but we decided to do everything in our power. At first we educated Natasha through games. By age 3 she could count up to 10 and make words out of plastic letters. Soon she began to read books. She read her favorite book, *Myths of Ancient Greece*, so much that by 5 she nearly knew it by heart. At 3 she began to learn English and German through watching TV programs. She went in for gymnastics and choreography and took to drawing.

When Natasha was 5, she very much wanted to go to school. She begged me to take her to first grade. At school they had her take a test which she passed successfully. So she began school, and at first she was happy. But in two months she was dismissed, because the doctors prohibited her from attending school because of her age. The fact that she had the best results among her schoolmates didn't help.

She returned to school the next year, and was admitted to second grade. But her teacher didn't like the wide range of her interests. She thought they got in the way. She spoke of them disparagingly, made fun of them, and managed to create a humiliating atmosphere for Natasha. She began to come home from school in tears. My attempts to come to mutual understanding with the teacher failed.

I made up my mind to teach Natasha myself, at first on the basis of the school curriculum. But I was startled at the primitiveness of the textbooks. I thought what a bore it was for kids to read those books! So I seriously thought of using my own materials. However, it turned out to be a real problem, for there was only one legal way of teaching at that time: at a state school. Fortunately, the headmaster at Natasha's school appeared to be an understanding and sympathetic person. He made an exception to the rule and allowed Natasha to learn at home. We agreed that she would take exams in some subjects.

When we decided to take Natasha out of school, we met with a very cold response from our acquaintances. Even friends and relatives thought that we wouldn't be able to give our daughter a proper education. Slowly, this attitude began to change. Natasha succeeded in her studies and was even above average, and people became interested in our experiment. Our relations with the teachers at the school became easier than in the beginning, but nevertheless most of them had a negative attitude. Though nobody helped us, some elements of our studies aroused interest in people we didn't know but who heard about our family by chance.

We knew nothing about homeschooling in the U.S., and when I recently got your magazine for the first time, I was greatly surprised that homeschooling was legal in your country. This gave me some assurance and strengthened my position in discussions with my opponents. It was a big surprise for me too that in spite of a totally different social system and living standards, problems that American homeschooling families faced are much the same as we had.

We allowed Natasha to learn two or three subjects simultaneously. Then she passed exams and studied the next subjects. This system allowed her to cover two grades a year without particular strain. She completed the eighth grade program by age 11. At the same time, she studied at music school and at a painting school, went in for choreography, and learned English, German, and French.

Natasha now studies at college during the day and goes to the French lyceum in the evenings. In Russia there is no definite description of a college. Commonly it is something like a usual secondary school, but it has an extended educational program. After graduating, a student gets a profession and a secondary education diploma. The college that Natasha has entered attracted our attention because every teacher there has his own program of education, there is no such strict regulation of teaching as in a usual secondary school, and there is a greater variety of courses.

Natasha studies in the eighth grade and she is one or two years younger than her classmates. She had an opportunity to enter the ninth grade, but there would be too great a difference in age, so it would cause some difficulties in communication. We had such an experience in the lyceum where Natasha studied French.

So why did we decide to stop homeschooling? First because it was not legislatively assured. Formally Natasha had to be on the enrollment list of a regular school, and everything depended very much on our relations with its principal and teachers, so teaching was too closely connected to a strict school program. Second, by that time Natasha had a certain level of knowledge and she needed a higher level of education which we felt less able to give her. Third, the cost of private lessons in foreign language had become very high. Education in college is free and Natasha now studies these languages there.

The main goal of our homeschooling was to protect Natasha from the official traditional system of upbringing aimed at the suppression of personality. So at home we tried to arrange the conditions for developing Natasha's creative abilities, memory, and versatile interests. I think we've achieved that aim.

Challenging the LD Label

In GWS #63 we interviewed Gerald Coles, author of The Learning Mystique: A Critical Look at Learning Disabilities. *The book is a challenge to the way the LD label is used in school and to the idea that learning disabilities are primarily neurologically based. In the interview, Coles discussed the way that adults' expectations of children can affect their learning, and he referred to studies in which children whom psychologists have been told are learning disabled actually acted as though they were disabled. Coles said that "even within the literature that's attempting to substantiate the neurological explanation, there's evidence that learning difficulties are not caused by children's neurology but by their interactions within contexts." He also discussed why the neurological explanation of children's difficulties became so popular: unlike other explanations or proposals for change, this one didn't demand that schools make any changes in their basic structure. "It simply asked schools to recognize another defect in children," Coles said.*

We were interested to know what had happened since The Learning Mystique *was published in 1987. How had the LD establishment responded? Had parents or teachers been able to use the book to make changes? When we asked Coles to tell us about the book's aftermath, he responded:*

I think the book has helped win a lot of battles. Whether it will win the war is another question. The book represented a large portion of people in the LD field who had views similar to mine – I wasn't simply talking as an individual, but was articulating a point of view that many people held. When the book came out, I got a lot of letters and phone calls from teachers, professors, and parents telling me how much they appreciated it. I've been in contact with large numbers of people who have told me they've used the book to teach differently, to train future teachers differently, to effect changes within schools.

One teacher, for example, was able to persuade her entire school to stop using standardized tests on kids who are referred for special education, kids who are identified as having a learning disability. School psychologists are actually very receptive to this kind of reform, because more often than not, they've simply become testers. They don't have a chance to use their psychological skills, to get to know kids and to look at kids as they really learn. So there's an enormous amount of frustration, and if you have an enlightened principal, you can sometimes effect this kind of change. If you look at what's happening nationwide among school psychologists, you see that there are a lot of very good reforms, where they're not using standardized tests anymore on kids who have been referred for special ed. Instead they spend time going into the classrooms, looking at how the kid is learning and how the teacher is teaching, and they work in a supportive way to make changes. In the majority of schools, it's still a testing mill and nothing has changed, but in maybe thirty percent of schools, there's been a minimization or an abandonment of the use of these tests.

The school had never asked, "What are the circumstances in your child's life?" They looked at the child and said, "This is a child with Attention Deficit Disorder and Learning Disabilities."

Parents have also used the book to challenge classification of their children and to challenge conventional psychometric assessment. They've gone in and said, "What are you going to do with this test? How is this test, concretely, going to translate into educational practice for my child?" For the most part, nobody can answer that, because for the most part the test has nothing to do with educational practice. I've heard from parents who have forced child-study teams to go beyond the testing gobbledy-gook and come up with concrete recommendations. I've encouraged parents to sit in on the special ed classroom and see what's actually going on. Very often you find the same old stuff, just a lot more of it. Instead of the two skills kits that they use in the regular classroom, the kids in special ed are using six of them. They're learning consonant blends over and over and *over*, instead of just over and over.

Some parents read the book after their child has already been labeled or classified. It's more difficult to challenge things then, but in some cases the child has been moved out of special ed and back into a regular classroom.

When I've talked to parents, either before the child has been formally classified or afterwards, one of the things that has been very apparent is that the child-study teams never take the time to know the child or the conditions in which the child is developing. I'll give a classic example: a mother once came to see me because her daughter was in a special education class and was classified as having a learning disability and Attention Deficit Disorder. As we talked, she told me about the family circumstances at the time the daughter entered school. The daughter had been very close to her grandparents, and both of them died just at that time. The mother and father had had a falling out and had temporarily broken up. The father just walked out of the family, and the mother was trying to complete a professional degree. All of this was going on, and the school had never asked the mother, "What are the circumstances in your child's life?" They looked at the child and said, "This is a child with Attention Deficit Disorder, Learning Disabilities, and Emotional Disturbance."

This is consistently the practice – these very cursory evaluations and categorizations. When parents have come to me after their child has been classified, I've been able to work with them to apprise the schools of what this history has been, and then the testers say, "Oh, oh, we didn't recognize that."

At times parents, acting on their own, are able to bring about change within a school. But it's also true that having a professional, like myself, who can be a persuasive force, makes a big difference. If there were parent support groups, that might help too. Unfortunately parents in these situations often wind up in isolation, and there's another parent down the block with the same problem, but nobody knows about it.

The book has also been cited a lot, including in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. The culmination of this changing attitude toward learning disabilities, as seen in the popular literature, was an article in *US News & World Report*, in the 12/13/93 issue. It was titled "Separate But Unequal," with the subtitle, "How Special Education Programs are Cheating Our Children and Costing Taxpayers Billions Each Year." The article was very critical of classification, of testing, of the racist nature of a lot of LD classification, and so on.

All of this is the good news. The other side is that there are still a lot of people who strongly adhere to the strictly biological interpretation of learning disabilities. I am also concerned that the criticism of the LD explanation, which is articulated pretty well in the *US News & World Report* article, is *not* an indication of a reform insight meant to help children, but is rather a use of the critique for political ends. The subtitle of the article, about what this is costing taxpayers, is a sign of this, to me. Even though there's a line in the article that says you can't just put these kids back into regular classes without support, in fact that seems to me to be exactly what many people who argue against labeling and against special ed really mean. They're concerned about cutting costs more than they are concerned about the children's needs. They're not helping teachers who may really need help in working with children with various kinds of difficulties. For example, the money that is saved by taking kids out of special education is not then being used to reduce the teacher-student ratio. These are often kids who do have difficulties – the source of those difficulties is of course what's arguable, but they do have them – and nobody is starting off with the question, "What are the kids' problems, and what do we have to do to address these problems?"

There's also the danger that even when people say, "Let's not classify kids anymore," that winds up being a charade because even if the child is not classified formally, everyone knows how that kid is viewed in the eyes of the system. Maybe the kid is not called LD officially, but everybody says it silently.

During the very same week that the the *US News* article came out, there was a major article in *New York* magazine on Attention Deficit Disorder, and it bought the neurological explanation hook, line, and sinker. So new labels can crop up that don't necessarily reflect signficiant changes in the way we look at children. Just as the LD label replaced the EMR label (Educable Mentally Retarded) as a classification, after there was a lot of criticism of IQ tests, now the ADD label often replaces the LD label.

Schools and Homeschoolers

Susan Henry of Massachusetts writes:

I am a teacher in an alternative public school. I am writing to share my support for homeschooling as an alternative learning environment for children, and to encourage homeschoolers to work alongside others who try to support children's learning and growth in various settings. GWS homeschoolers may be surprisingly linked – philosophically – with many public and private school educators.

The best education is personalized, which is why homeschooling is such an important and often successful option – people paying close attention to and honoring individual choice, growth, and interest. Homeschoolers are linked with many other educators around these primary concerns. Just because some of us work in schools doesn't mean we don't work toward many of the same goals as homeschoolers. In fact, in my case anyway, *because* I work in schools, I am particularly interested in the strong points of homeschooling, of which there are many. I also believe I have observations and ideas to share with homeschoolers. There is common ground.

When my daughter was born almost seven years ago, I felt intensely relieved and delighted to be able to enjoy one child, to watch the subtle and significant learnings of one child, rather than to be constantly dividing my attention and efforts among the activities of 22 to 26 children and always feeling like there was more, more, more I should be doing. Watching my own daughter's growth and playing with her, offering her a range of materials, experiences, and interactions, was grand. When she approached school age, I felt saddened that she would not fill her days learning in her own self-determined, powerful way. She was such an inspired learner.

I considered homeschooling, but felt schools had things to offer which I could not offer at home. They also had negative frameworks to offer. Public schools are, after all, institutions designed to manage efficiently the education of masses of children. Part of me hated giving my child over to such an institution even though I was a member of the institution and I had a very high regard for the colleagues with whom I was placing her. At the same time, I was greatly relieved that I had this terrific school for her, a school where teachers were creative and thoughtful and respectful of children. They were caring and honored the interests of children and they supported children's social and emotional development. I felt fortunate. Anxious, but fortunate.

There are many things that can always be done better in some way or other. I feel that both as a teacher and as a parent viewing my child's schooling. My goal in teaching is to close the gap between how children learn at home and how they learn at school. Schools should be more like homes, in many important ways. They should be more nurturing and caring, more personal. They should be more flexible in what they allow children to do and for how long and with whom. They should not be so confined by their walls, their grade levels, and their curricula. They should offer more comfortable and varied physical environments. They should more effectively honor individual styles and ways of being.

And perhaps, in some ways, homeschoolers should take on some of what good schools do well. Parents could pursue training in areas they feel nervous about. Or how many could benefit from a better understanding of assessment issues or

different ways to approach and integrate math, science, writing, or reading. (There are plenty of homeschoolers who plug their children into convenient workbooks for drill and practice in areas they don't feel they know well enough to teach any other way.) Many homeschooling parents could try to provide settings for children where they can pursue longer-term collaborations with peers, dealing with differences, group dynamics. An interest group that works together once a week for eight or twelve weeks does not accomplish the same relationship explorations and community building that some classrooms of children do over the course of a year or more. And some homeschooling parents could give their children more room in the world without peering over their activities all the time. It is sometimes a downside of homeschooling that parent-teachers are there all the time, morning to night.

My point is that we should all be concerned with what works for children. One setting, home or school, is not the issue. What we are all working for, what I work for, is to support children's perseverance, their curiosity, their interest and delight and to help them develop the skills necessary to become productive, contributing, and caring members of any number of communities. How best to do that is deeply rooted in each individual child and supportive adult. When you look beyond the school walls, the square classrooms, and the lunch periods and think about those two central figures, a teacher and child, home and school are not always so different. There is a natural overlap of concern and sometimes of philosophy. There can be answers in common. Children can only benefit from educators of all sorts talking with each other. Everyone has something to learn.

Satellite Town Meetings

As part of the U.S. Department of Education's Goals 2000 initiative, citizens will have a chance to participate in Satellite Town Meetings on various issues. Through downlink sites, people will be able to talk to President Clinton, other officials, and guests with experience in the area under discussion. To find out how your community can join, or for information about downlink sites or public television access in your area, call 1-800-USA-LEARN. If any homeschoolers participate, we'd be interested to know what happens. Here's the schedule of meetings for the coming months:

February 15, 1994: "Opportunity to Learn: Helping ALL Students to Reach High Standards"

March 15: "Preparing World-Class Teachers"

April 19: ""Helping US Students to Be First in the World in Math and Science"

May 17: "The Arts in Education"

June 21: "Increasing Parental Involvement in Education"

Calendar

April 22-23, 1994: **Wisconsin Parents Association 11th annual conference** on home education in Stevens Point. For info: WPA, PO Box 2502, Madison WI 53701; Melissa Rice, 715-341-6378.

April 23: **Oregon Homeschool Conference** in Portland. For info: Oregon Home Education Network, 4470 SW Hall Blvd #286, Beaverton OR 97005; 503-321-5166.

May 6-7: **National Homeschool Association regional conference** in central Mass. For info: SASE to NHA, PO Box 157290, Cincinnati OH 45215-7290 513-772-9580 or 413-637-2169.

May 14: **Holt Associates Fourth Annual Conference** in Lexington, Mass. Workshops, panel discussion, chance to purchase our books. Write or call our office for further info.

June 3-5: **California Coalition - PALS conference** in San Bernadino National Forest, California. Pat Farenga will be speaking. For info: John Boston, 619-749-1522.

We are happy to print announcements about major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #98 (events in May or later) is March 10. Deadline for GWS #99 (events in July or later) is May 10. For more information about events, write to the state groups.

Office News

[SS:] Thanks, as always, to everyone who helped make this holiday rush season a successful one for us. As we head into the new year, we're scheduled to conduct four more seminars in our expanded office space. Two will have already happened by the time you get this issue of GWS (Introduction to Homeschooling and Learning Without a Curriculum, both by Pat Farenga), but two others will still be forthcoming: Life After Homeschooling, which I'll be doing (February 26th) and Coping With Children's Differences, by Massachusetts GWS reader Wanda Rezac (March 19th). Then, our fourth annual conference is scheduled for May 14th in Lexington, Mass. If you aren't on our local mailing list and want information about these events, give us a call.

As you can see, we are using more photographs in the magazine now, so you are welcome to send photos along with any writing for publication that you send us. We are most likely to use clear photos with the subject in the foreground and an uncluttered background. We prefer photos of children doing what you or they wrote about, rather than posed shots. Black-and-white is preferable but not essential. Emily Linn, the homeschooling teenager from Michigan who does our drawings, works from photos and would also make good use of any you sent us.

Whenever a reader or customer sends a bit of extra money along, we put it into our gift subscription fund. This allows us to give subscriptions to people (often single parents or others on very low incomes) who couldn't otherwise afford them. This fund is now almost entirely depleted, so we welcome contributions. I know that when a reader wrote, a few issues ago, about being on a very low income and not being able to afford homeschooling materials, several readers wrote to offer her a gift subscription. She was of course only able to accept one subscription, but there are others like her who have written to us and who would be very grateful for similar generosity.

Homeschool Sports Teams

Stories about groups of homeschoolers who have formed their own sports teams and found other teams to play against.

Basketball in Pennsylvania

From Oskars Ruksts of Pennsylvania:

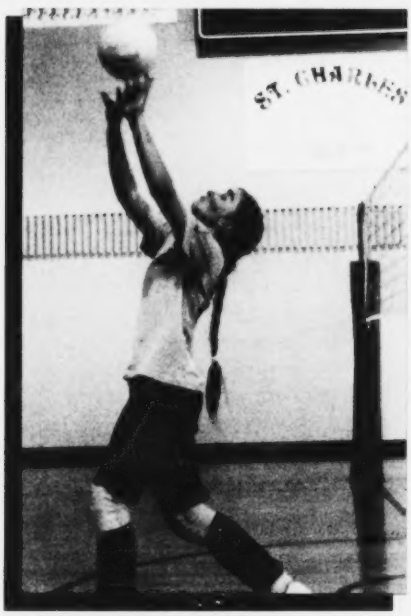
Our oldest son, who is now 15, had been playing basketball in YMCA and other programs, but when we moved to this area, there was no such program. We managed to find a community team for him for a year, but then he got too old for it, so we were without a basketball team for him, and this was a very big interest of his.

At this point I heard of a couple of other basketball players in our homeschool group, and we got the idea to form a homeschool team. We are part of a homeschool group that meets every two weeks, and we were meeting in a church that had a gym, so when we found some kids who were interested, we started practicing in the gym on the days of the meetings. During the first year, there were about seven or eight kids on the team, and their ages ranged from 11 to 16 or 17. The range of abilities was definitely a problem, but I tried to encourage the younger kids, and they did stay with it and have really improved. We only practice about once a week, not as often as a regular high school team, but I like the homeschooling aspect of it – I tell them things they can practice at home, and many of them are very self-motivated about that.

This is now our third year and we've had more kids become interested, so we have three teams – one for 7-10 year olds, one for 10-13 year olds, and one for high school-aged kids. The first year, we just played one game against another team, but the second year we played ten games. To find teams for us to play, my wife called up small Christian schools in the area and asked if we could play against them. It's harder at the younger level, because most schools don't have teams for that age and the community teams don't like go out of their league.

We're working on organizing a basketball fun day, where our team can play teams from other homeschool groups in the area. It will be like a tournament, but not with one winner; it'll be more like a round-robin, where people play different people throughout the day. This is something that could be done by others in parts of the country where there aren't small schools that are willing to play against homeschool teams. We chose basketball primarily because it was my son's interest, but we also liked the fact that you only need five players for a team. So you don't need too many kids to get something like this going.

I know that wanting to play team sports is a big reason some homeschoolers want to go to school, and I admit that was in the back of my mind when I started this, that maybe this would help some kids in that respect. It's also helped my son a lot; in the beginning, he was very shy and retiring, but basketball has really brought him out of his shell. He's now coaching the 10-13 year olds, and he enjoys it very much. From the beginning he's taken an interest in coaching – he would talk to me about how to do things, and he's read a few books about basketball and worked out his own exercises for the kids to do.



Elizabeth Wynja plays volleyball on the homeschool team in Colorado

Volleyball, Soccer, Softball, & Basketball in Colorado

From David Dye of Colorado:

We got involved in homeschooling eight years ago. At that time, a lady in Colorado was starting a homeschool program, something that would act as an umbrella school, and she wanted to include a sports program in it. We weren't interested in joining the umbrella school – our school district didn't bother us at all, and we didn't feel the need to be under an umbrella – but my wife volunteered me to coach the sports team.

We started out with one sport, volleyball. There were three families at that time, including mine, with a total of seven kids ranging from sixth grade to eleventh. We were able to play against other teams in a Christian schools league, and it's quite remarkable that we ended up second in the league, out of eight teams.

In the middle of the season, the lady who had started the group decided she didn't want to run an umbrella school anymore, so the remaining six kids, from the two other families, finished out the season. After that I thought, "Well, that didn't work out too well," and we didn't really talk about continuing. But then that summer my oldest son, who at the time was in eighth grade, really wanted to play sports. So we promised him that we would pursue setting up a team, and would try to get the word out to other homeschool families. We put a notice in the regional homeschool newsletter and families came - not a great many, but enough to play volleyball. As we got more kids involved, we started picking up other sports: co-ed soccer, co-ed softball, and

Brian Dye (center) and other members of the homeschoolers' basketball team in Colorado

individual girls' and boys' basketball teams.

We got involved with Denver Parks and Recreation, and when we used their gymnasium, we used it at a kind of low point in the day, when they didn't ordinarily get many people, so they didn't charge us anything for it. Over the years we moved to four or five different recreation centers in Denver, and each one welcomed us with open arms. An intern who worked at the first center was extremely helpful in showing us around and showing us techniques to teach volleyball. That was very helpful to me, as a coach. The next year, when I went to another rec center to see if it was available, that same intern was working there! She set everything up for us, and throughout the next eight years, we were always able to call her director to get things arranged – to set up referees, and for help with tournaments.

We practiced twice a week, and played games once a week. That can be demanding, and we did have families drop out, but we always had enough for a team. The league we were in required that there be a certain number of junior high school kids on the field, or the court, at all times, so we opened it to 13 through 19 year olds. Younger than that – say, 11 or 12 year olds – just weren't quite strong enough to play against high school seniors. Sometimes it was a challenge to work with the age range that we had, but the kids got good, and we became successful rather quickly.

Although we were playing in a Christian schools league, it wasn't a requirement that the players be Christian. We didn't require it, and the league didn't require that our homeschool team have a certain doctrine. But there is also a league in this area, bigger than our league, that has secular schools in it, so that may be another option in some places. There were certainly kids from many different backgrounds in our league, and within our own team. It was neat for the kids to see the different cultures.

I had parents tell me, many times, "If it weren't for this group, we'd have to put our children back in school." Some of the kids were so interested in sports, and had felt that was lacking in homeschooling, but now that need was fulfilled. We were fortunate to have a lot of kids play with us who really wouldn't have gotten a chance to play if they were in school. There were kids who, I believe, wouldn't have made the team in school, but with us they had the opportunity to play. I've enjoyed being able to teach some kids the fundamentals, because, in some cases, they just wouldn't have gotten a chance otherwise.

Further Reading

In addition to these stories about homeschoolers forming their own sports teams, we have printed stories about homeschoolers playing on school teams, or trying to. In particular, see:

GWS #77: "Participating in Team Sports" (about a homeschooler on the school's track team)

GWS #78: "Getting Permission to Join School Team" (gymnastics; see also GWS #95 for the continuation of the story)

GWS #79: "Allowed on School Teams in Maine"

GWS #82: "Playing on School Teams" (track and basketball)

GWS #83: "Fitting in at Group Activities" (includes stories about homeschoolers on *community* soccer teams)

GWS #86: "Access to School Activities in Oregon"

GWS #89: "Access to School Activities in Connecticut"

Also, we have printed stories about homeschoolers forming other kinds of groups. In particular, see GWS #85 for stories about social groups, an environmental group, and book discussion groups, and see GWS #94 for detailed stories about two teen groups that are involved in both academic and social activities. GWS #77 has an interview about a homeschoolers' writing group, too.

The December 1993 issue of *Mentor*, the newsletter of the Home Education League of Parents, has several stories about homeschoolers forming bands, theatre groups, and clubs. This issue is available for $2 from HELP, Suite 131, 3208 Cahuenga Blvd West, Los Angeles CA 90068.

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Challenges & Concerns

Because we received so many responses to Daphne Slocombe's question about "the nitty-gritty of how people arrange their lives financially in order to afford to homeschool," we are devoting this entire Challenges & Concerns to that subject.

Parents Work Split Shifts

From Tammy Billeci (CA):

My husband and I work for a small company of family-owned and operated grocery outlet stores. It has been my husband's and my dream to someday become owner / operators. In order to do this we are required by the parent company to start out at the bottom of the company and work our way up, and the wife is required to work forty hours a week, not to mention being financially sound.

During our first year of homeschooling (kindergarten), I worked forty hours a week, commuted an hour a day and chauffeured my son to music and Tae kwon do lessons. It was a very stressful year with the busy schedule and the problems of being a very new homeschooler.

When first grade rolled around, my son's babysitter (a homeschooling mother of five) informed me that because of her busy schedule, she would no longer be able to care for him. I had been dreaming of changing over to part-time work and now this was my chance, because I knew of no one else I would want to babysit my son. I told the owner of our store that I would need to step down from managing my department so that I could work part time.

It's been one-and-a-half years since I began working part time, and it works great. Since my husband and I work at the same place, our boss has been very understanding. I start work at 5:00 AM and at 10:00 AM when my husband arrives at the store with our son, I leave with my son and we begin our day of adventures together. Occasionally when I get behind at work my son will stay an hour with me and help sort boxes and price merchandise or throw away trash.

We have made a big sacrifice by homeschooling. If we put our child in public school I would be able to work full time and reach our goal of being financially stable enough to become owner / operators. But there's no way I would think of putting my child in school just so I could make more money. We live in a small, one-bedroom apartment and drive ugly, old cars, but that's the choice we've made. Recently I found out that a family who owns and operates a store in another city is also homeschooling, so that was encouraging and exciting.

So we've been able to homeschool and still afford to live by having understanding, cooperative employers and by my going to work earlier in the morning and getting off when my husband arrives. This way we still have my part-time income. It has worked quite well for us.

Being Self-Employed

From Tara Pagoda of Colorado:

Here are the particulars on how we are working to afford to keep one of us with Cloe, our 3 year old. Being self-employed allowed us to work flexible hours, which meant that with some creativity and some sacrifice to sleep, personal time, and time with each other (my husband and I), we could schedule ourselves so that one of us was always with Cloe. Before she was born, I did private massage therapy, taught massage classes, and worked for our computer consulting business. I stopped doing massage when I was seven months pregnant and stopped teaching shortly thereafter. We experienced a definite drop in our monthly income. Thus began our managing strategies of a new budget. Howard worked extra hours and we cut what expenses we could.

Fortunately, I've been able to continue to work at our computer business since Cloe was born. Because my work is not tied to regular 9-5 business hours, I can work at any hour. And believe me, I did and still do work at just about every hour. Sometimes I get up early, or stay up late, or I do it in Cloe's naptime (whether I get in five minutes or two hours is always the question). I worked Saturdays, Sundays, you name it – I work any strange hour. I even have Cloe with me when I work. When she was younger she would lie in a little rocker chair that I rocked with my toes, and now she comes and plays with the office equipment.

Howard's work is more tied to regular business hours, but he has stayed up late, gotten up early, and worked weekends as well in order to do what needed to be done. I also trade sewing, babysitting, and massage with my playgroup moms and dads for babysitting of Cloe, in order to get more daytime hours in which to work.

For the last year I have also supplemented our income by babysitting for money. This is a job that I can do with Cloe. I also have a natural fiber doll and doll clothing business which I am working on slowly and which I am hoping will become another source of income that we can count on. Howard and I think that being diversified in generating our income is good for many reasons. The doll business is something that I can definitely do with Cloe with me. She plays alongside me while I sew and it has many learning aspects for her, quite naturally.

Having Cloe be a constant part of our lives, including our work, is important to Howard and me. I always felt excluded from my parents' lives in general and especially from their work. My parents treated us children

as objects and made it clear that we were not part of what went on in "real life" (which was their adult world). Our feelings about Cloe are very different. She is a whole person and we want to connect with her and share our lives with her now. Thus, working with her in mind (and sometimes in presence) is a big part of our lives.

Father at Home, Mother Works Outside

From Jeanne Ferrari-Amas (IL):

When our two children were born a year apart, we decided that my husband Jason would be the "house-husband." I'm an RN, and there was a lot of work for nurses, with good benefits and steady income. Jason is a carpenter and work isn't always steady here.

Arranging your lives to home-school involves trade-offs and is a matter of really thinking about how you want your life to be. For us, either Jason would have to work five days a week, or I could work three 12-hour shifts and make a little more money, giving us four days a week for family time. Or we could both work and maybe have a nicer home and extras, but probably little time together. We opted for me to work three 12-hour night shifts. The cost of living made it a struggle at times, but we've always felt we have such quality to our days.

The days I worked I did come home tired, but Jason was there and I'd usually stay awake and compromise my sleep to see the kids. It was worth it – a trade-off. Sure, I was tired at times, but for me it beat sending them to a sitter, and it gave me time to be with them.

Both Jason and I felt a little pressure from society's expectations. Other males, especially, didn't take Jason's being a househusband seriously, and people would tell me that Jason should work because I was "doing too much." But our home ran smoothly and we treasured our time.

We were planning on continuing this arrangement, taking one day or year at a time, when Hurricane Iniki struck. Now there were lots of carpentry jobs, so Jason now works five days a week and I continue to work three 12-hour shifts, usually Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. So that leaves us Sundays when we're all together. Our family time is diminished, but now the children are 8 and 9 years old and are able to stay alone for short periods of time and don't really need two parents around as much. Our family time is still important: Jason takes a half day off once a week, and I manage to use my vacation time, so we still have time together. Flexibility is really important to us. The priority has always been time – time with the kids, time with each other, time to enjoy and experience life.

Both Work at Home

From Lee Criscuolo of Virginia:

I'm writing this lying on a hammock at the edge of the woods. The leaves are changing color. It's a beautiful, cool, cloudy day. The

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chickens are foraging for bugs around me. I can hear the children playing in the aster patch. My husband Ed is in our beat-up leaky trailer doing data entry on our computer. In an hour or so, it will be my turn. Ed will probably read to himself, make lunch for the kids, sort more data to be entered, or read to or play with the kids.

Doing data entry is extremely mindless and boring, but I try to do my share when the good public radio talk shows, or news shows, are on, or I listen to Italian language tapes. I also do all my phone calls as I work. And working at home means I can take a short break, or get a snack, whenever I like.

We're both lucky enough to be able to stay home and work. I type fast and earn about $20/hour. Ed manages about $10/hour. Some days we do no data entry; other days we do more than usual. It averages out to about three hours a day for each of us. Not a bad workday. I also own and operate a small horseback-riding school here on our property. It's hard work but work that I enjoy, with plenty of fringe benefits for our kids. This year the riding school will net about $2500 – an all-time high.

Our total combined income comes to $15,000 to $18,000 per year. We have two children. What have we had to give up? Not one single thing that we value. We don't try to keep up with the Joneses. In addition to our old mobile home which we've lived in for the last five years, we've now nearly completed a dome home from a kit. We've more than doubled our living space and the kids each have their own room now. The only thing left to do is the plumbing, which I've saved for last because it rather intimidates me. The dome is extremely energy efficient, so we'll have to cut a lot less firewood from now on. The total cost of the whole dome will be about $40,000. Of course we did all the work ourselves. It's taken three years and a lot of work to build, but it's been very satisfying, the children have learned a lot from watching us deal with new things and helping where they could, and since we bought materials little by little as we needed them, we didn't go into debt, except for making a few purchases by credit card. We scrounged and bought as much secondhand as we could.

In other areas – we don't take any vacations involving air travel. We don't go to King's Dominion (a big amusement park nearby – $21 per person admission). We keep a jar of change to use for the volunteer fire department carnival each year. We use the public pool. We use the library a lot. We go to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, which has wonderful free museums. We go to puppet shows and live performances for kids at their Discovery Theater – admission is $3.25 and well worth it. We have no TV, so we don't spend money renting and buying video tapes.

The only new clothes I buy are shoes. Everything else comes from thrift stores or is given to us as gifts. We don't look particularly shabby, nor particularly fashionable. All our furniture we've gotten free, except our kids' beds and a futon.

Our main expenses are auto insurance and repairs. We can't afford any health insurance at all. Maybe President Bill will fix that, but fortunately we're all healthy so far.

We have lots of time to do the things we enjoy and feel are important: homeschooling, volunteer work, Ed working on his college degree at age 40, gardening, loving each other, spending time together, etc.

Last but not least, a big part of the equation is my mother. She put up collateral for the loan to buy the land we live on when I was still in college and had no collateral or credit of my own. She loves to watch our kids and doesn't charge us. She is "financially tranquil" and we know if we have a medical emergency she will back us up. And when my father died six years ago, he left me $50,000 which enabled me to pay off the loan on the land and start up a solar electric system, which lets us live mortgage- and electric bill-free.

So in our case, good financial luck has helped, and Yankee ingenuity and hard work have helped too. If you've saved up some money to get started on and don't much care for fads and fashion and your family is in good physical and mental health, it seems to me you'll be able to manage on one income if that is important to you.

Sharing Responsibilities

From Jane Darnell (VT):

Before we had children, Sky and I knew we wanted to raise them ourselves, we wanted to homeschool, and we wanted to do it *together*. This meant we had to figure out just how much money we needed to live on and how to earn it part time. In the seven years since Dana was born we have done a wide variety of things that have enabled both of us to contribute money to the household and have given us maximum time together as a family.

When Dana was an infant, Sky was attending college three days a week, so I went to work two evenings a week as a nurse at a nursing home and one day a week as a home visitor for teen mothers. Dana was not only welcome during my home-visiting, but she was an integral part of my teaching plan. At the nursing home Dana was also welcome, and several times, when Sky could not get home by 2:30 I took Dana with me until he could pick her up. She rode in a backpack or crawled around on the floor entertaining the residents. During this time we also built our house, with Dana in the backpack on Sky's back.

By the time Dana was 1 1/2, I had acquired a new job and Sky had started his mediation practice. His mediation work involved spending some time at court, attending meetings, and mediating with clients. His schedule was quite erratic – some weeks he was gone 10 or 15 hours, some not at all. I had begun working for the local battered women's program doing direct service with the victims, 30 hours a week. Dana often came with me to the office. This was generally OK as we had a play area for kids and I could take her with me to court and the police station when I had to file papers. If an emergency came up, she either stayed with an office volunteer or came with me until Sky could fetch her.

Things evolved with this job. I found that 30 hours was too much and so I cut back to 20 and began doing the office work – bookkeeping and statistics – much of which I could do at home. I also taught childbirth classes

and "overcoming overeating" classes. Sky began to work for the women's organization as well, running a support group for abused children and teaching kids in the local schools about domestic violence. He worked about 15 hours a week.

In the midst of all this we also had two small home businesses – we made and sold fresh salsa and maple syrup. The salsa business involved a day's work each month to make the salsa and deliver it. The maple syrup business was much more time consuming, involving tree tapping in February and March, boiling the sap into syrup and canning it during the two or three weeks at the end of March beginning of April when the sap runs, cleaning up in April and May, cutting, splitting, and stacking the firewood throughout the summer and fall, and marketing the syrup through mail order and craft fairs throughout the year. Both these businesses were family affairs from start to finish.

By the time I got pregnant with Saver (Dana was 3), things changed again. I stopped working for the battered women's program and began to do freelance writing. This work was done at home and that made things much easier (though it meant less money at first). Sky's mediation practice was getting a bit busier so he dropped his domestic violence work. For added income he ran the child care for the local Parents Anonymous group (three hours a week) for about a year.

Since Saver was born three years ago, things have continued to develop. I still work as a freelance writer, about 20-30 hours a month. During the past four years I have written a book (Saver often nursing while I typed), have had over 100 articles published, and done research for a travel book (mainly accompanied by Dana). In the past year I have started working again at the nursing home, two or three evenings a month – whenever they call me. Dana and Saver come with me if necessary (a bit easier, now that they're older), and the residents enjoy the diversion. Sky's mediation practice continues to grow and he works 10-20 hours a week, some of it at home (phone calls and paperwork) and some at his office or at court. This semester he will be teaching two classes for the local community college. We sold the salsa business a year ago but continue making maple syrup. We also sell some eggs and vegetables to a local restaurant. Every so often Sky will put in a day with a carpenter friend if she's short a crew member or has a pressing deadline.

Now and then, in a panic, we apply for a "regular" job. Fortunately, the panics are usually short-lived (often when Sky is between mediations and I am between assignments at the same time and the car breaks down) and we have never had to resort to 40 hours a week. We have to learn how to live on a low and irregular income. Our extra time at home gives us the opportunity to save money (and provide learning experiences) by gardening, raising animals for food, doing our own carpentry and repair work, etc. Working at home and part time also saves money otherwise spent for commuting, lunches out, nice clothes, and other work-related expenses. However, it can seem a bit too close at times, the four of us. To remedy that we built a tiny cabin this fall as a "parent retreat center," where one of us can disappear for an afternoon for some peace and quiet to read or sleep or just relax alone. The important thing is that by living in this unusual, and sometimes scary, way we have accomplished what we set out to do – participate equally, in partnership, as breadwinners and parents.

Shift to One Income

From Clare Cooper (NJ):

We made the shift to a one-income household when my son was nine months old and I was making a good – and the higher – salary. First of all, there's always a savings to stopping work – no child care costs, gasoline usage drops dramatically, your wardrobe can be pared down to jeans and a couple of t-shirts, fast food and prepared foods can be (and for health purposes should be) virtually eliminated, going out to lunch with the office crowd becomes a thing of the past.

Also, you have to set your priorities. If you've chosen homeschooling, you've made your children's education a priority. Look at other things in your life. As part of our homeschooling, we consider family vacations to be very important, so we forego going out to restaurants, the movies, expensive amusement parks, etc., so that we can take those vacations. Our entertainment is simple and inexpensive. We take evening walks, take hikes on weekends, make popcorn and read some fun books, and do craft projects together.

Important Decisions

From Deborah Bydlon (AK):

We have three young children – ages 4, 2, and 1 month – whom we plan on homeschooling. In order to do this, we have had to make some important lifestyle decisions. The biggest of these is that we decided that I could not be employed outside the home. This means that my husband is the sole financial supporter of our home. He had worked in the social service field, and his income was not sufficient to meet our expenses. We needed to be creative to allow me to stay at home.

My husband moonlighted for a newspaper distribution company on the weekends. He also created and successfully ran a small at-home saddle business. This proved to be more lucrative than we had imagined, not to mention being a great experience and a boost for his self-esteem.

My husband was not, however, satisfied in his job, and he decided to go back to school full time. This has been difficult, but we are doing it for our future plans of homeschooling. We need to secure Andy a full-time job that will pay enough to cover our expenses, without his having to moonlight so much. This meant moving cross-country, from South Dakota to Alaska, for him to attend school. It also meant taking out student loans and being extremely thrifty.

Watching Children Learn

Schedules Can Help

Penny Baker (OH) writes:

Susannah's article in GWS #93, "When Schedules and Appointments are Useful," reminded me that in my early years of homeschooling I aligned scheduling with "school at home" as opposed to "learning without schooling." In retrospect, though, I realize how much scheduling has actually been a part of our twenty years of homeschooling, and I've always considered us *un*schoolers.

From the time our children were very young, mealtimes, animal and house chores, and bedtime reading were as much a part of our days as the rising and setting of the sun – important daily events in our nonelectrified lifestyle. The hours between meals and chore times and nightly reading were there to be dealt with. Knowing that one of the great disadvantages of the school system is that young people have no time to themselves and little or no chance to plan any part of their day, we didn't want to schedule our kids' entire lives, so we gave loose headings to these in-between hours.

The time between morning chores and lunch we called "concentrated work time," when the children would pursue any of their interests knowing that help was available from Papa Richard, me, or another mentor. After lunch we would decide what general project needed doing on the farmstead, and we called this hour and a half or two hours "community time." After this, and until evening chores and supper, we had "personal time," meaning each person could do anything of his or her choosing. This meant that if someone wanted to lie on the hill, gaze at the sky, or in some way appear to do nothing, that was fine. We didn't give headings to portions of the day just to ensure that everyone was busy all the time.

These divisions to our day were not followed like clockwork. In fact, as anyone who lives in one place for a number of years will verify, people are able to move though their days by the look of the light and the "feel" of the day rather than by actual analogue time. One of the things I miss in these last few years of peripatetic living is this kind of awareness of my day. But since we regularly spend the same seasons in each of three areas (Ohio, Michigan, and Montana), I am beginning to regain this clockless-time knowledge in each place. During the summer the young visitors at our farmstead program often ask how I know when to fix lunch or when it's time to go to bed since they see no clocks. I explain to them that I have a feel for the time by the look of the light coming through the kitchen windows (if we're making bread when they ask) or by the shadow cast by the corn or asparagus ferns (if we're working in the garden). This seems to be a new way of thinking about time for many children.

The casual scheduling our family did as the kids were growing up lent a structure that our children have incorporated into their adult lives and which seems to be serving them well. Britt, with her two piano studios and her writing work, has to schedule well or she doesn't have time to get out into those Wyoming mountains that she dearly loves. Maggie has to keep her dogs and herself on fitness and training schedules if she expects to continue winning races and earning her living as a dogsledder. Dan's day must schedule in his classes at the University of Montana but also allow adequate time in each day for his cello practice in order for him to maintain his job with the Missoula Symphony Orchestra. Ben's scheduling includes things like distances, elevations, sunrises, and sunsets as he traverses the backcountry (he has been living outdoors in the backcountry for four continuous months now). Jonah, the only one of our children still living at home most of the year, continues to plan his days in accordance with Richard's and mine. We still operate around a schedule that includes meals, chores, per-sonal work, family / community work, and a balance between indoors and outdoors.

I've noticed something with my four older children: though they like to schedule their own time in terms of days, weeks, months, and are even quite effective at goal-setting in terms of one to five years, they all steer away from the rigid scheduling of a 9-5 job. I regularly argue with myself about whether they are simply "spoiled" or whether they are wonderfully free spirits who resist the "real world" options of our culture. My feeling of wanting to have raised human beings rather than cultural robots always wins out, and this was recently reinforced by a talk I heard among a group of progressive thinkers in Canada. It was their conclusion that in the not-so-distant future, we will look back to the 9-5 workday, working for someone else, as a form of slavery, and that the wave of the future is a kind of entrepreneurship wherein each person offers his or her skills directly to the culture in his or her own unique way, a "my-specialty-is-this, what-can-I-offer-my-world" kind of thinking. This seems to me an exciting and promising idea that offers a dynamic way of living, if it can be realized.

At any rate, our family has always seemed to function best, i.e. creatively, happily, and in a satisfied manner, when we've had a bit of a schedule. Scheduling seems to have worked well for each of the varied personalities in our family of seven. In fact, it is hard to imagine getting done all we've needed to without the order to our days that a schedule offered.

She Resists Lessons

From Karen Mende-Fridkis (NJ):

There is usually one letter in each issue of GWS that speaks directly to some experience that I am going through or have recently passed through. In GWS #95, I read with interest Laurie Clark's essay about when children resist. I have had similar feelings and questions about how my daughter would have reacted in school when she was confused or bored or not interested in what was being taught. Periodically I go through times of doubting my children's ability to learn what they need to know. It is then that I begin to panic and try to teach.

During one of these times I urgently informed my husband that every second grader should be familiar with fractions. I asked him, "Shouldn't we bring Kate up to grade level? After all, that's what's written in the curriculum guide." Larry simply stated that Kate is learning fractions when she cuts up her sandwich and there wasn't any need to sit her down and turn it into schoolwork. He advised me not to worry about it. Never one to follow what others say, I was not assuaged by his faith. I became convinced that Kate needed to have this knowledge at her fingertips now, and it was my duty to teach it to her.

First I set the stage by informing Kate that we were going to work on math that morning. This gave her time to settle into the idea. Then we began the day by doing something she enjoyed – reading aloud. After that, I gently told her that after this story I wanted to start our math. In my mind I had it all worked out. I made it easy for her: she received plenty of warning, a special fun time preceeded math, and my goals could be reached in a short period of time - only five problems a session.

Sometimes Kate would willingly go to the table for her lesson. But as soon as I opened my mouth to give an explanation, her body would droop, her shoulders would slump down, her head would crash into her outstretched arm, and she would wriggle out of her chair. On my better days I kept my patience and calmly and cheerfully announced that we would learn the meaning of 1/2 and 1/4. Groans would escape from Kate's lips. Undaunted, I would continue. In a minute or two Kate would be in tears, and I would be asking myself, "What is the matter with this child? Why can't she do five math problems when I ask her? What would happen to her in school?"

I could see that this method wasn't working, but I still held fast to my current preoccupation – fractions in second grade. I tried different approaches, such as making fun of our math duty to lighten the air, making math fun, taking time off, pretending math was something I loved teaching her, going through each lesson slowly and leisurely, or, conversely moving rapidly through the basics. Some of these approaches would work for a day or more, but invariably Kate would end up slumped and glass-eyed or in tears.

That lasted for a month or two. Then I took a rest. Time has given me

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perspective. No longer do I ask Kate to sit at the dining room table for a daily math lesson. Math comes into our lives in new, less school-like settings. I can see that Kate is quite capable of adding, subtracting, dividing, and even multiplying when it is presented in a less threatening way. Yes, she can count by twos, fives, and tens. She enjoys doing this while bouncing a ball. From ball bouncing she is learning how to multiply. Stories told about her cousin's two dogs and all the bones they hide and eat cover the four processes of math. When she counts her money she learns the value of coins. Cutting her sandwich in quarters and her Playdough pizza into eight slices is her lesson in fractions.

Now I am learning to see that her moaning, groaning, crying, and raging anger at me is her way of preserving herself. I keep trying to mold her into a miniature me, but Kate boldly resists. And I silently celebrate her resistance. I have not abandoned what I feel is my role in homeschooling, but it is slowly being transformed from teacher into something different. I don't have a label for my newly emerging identity but it is one of sharing with the children as opposed to imparting my knowledge to them. Together we are exploring, discovering, and creating our world.

Jacob, my younger child, is showing me that all children learn differently. Unlike his sister, Jacob readily accepts instruction. He even thanks me for the simple directions that we give him. For example, he was puzzled as to what he should reply after people wished him happy birthday. When his father told him to say thanks, his confusion was cleared up and he was grateful. And after I gave him instructions on how to throw a frisbee, he again appreciated the input and began to throw faster, straighter, and farther.

Still I hesitate to offer too much of my expertise. I try to maintain a balance between telling him how to do something and letting him figure out his own way. Many times his method is what works best for him.

If You Really Want to Help...

Melany Cueva (AK) writes:

Katie, 9, has been baking since she was old enough to hold a spoon and stir. The kitchen, to her, is one big science experiment. Her repertoire has grown considerably over the years to include full meals. Yesterday, my husband and I were very eager to have her finish one of our favorite recipes, a great cinnamon coffee cake. We had both been offering our help to speed up the process. Finally, in as sincere and diplomatic a tone as a 9 year old can muster, she looked at me and said, "Mom, there is something you can do if you really want to help me."

I immediately jumped at the bait.

"You can help me the most by leaving me alone so I can finish this cake," she said. How true this statement rings. The best help we can offer our children sometimes is the freedom and time to progress on their own, exploring and developing independently. I reflect upon how many other times I unknowingly have helped, just to speed up the process, instead of allowing it to unfold naturally. This was a good reminder for me that often the best kind of help is really no help in the most common interpretation of the word but trusting and nurturing our children's ability to function independently.

Youngest Museum Volunteer

Matthew McDonough (CT) writes:

I am 9 years old and I work at the Eli Whitney Museum. I am the youngest person there and the only homeschooler. Most of the other people there are 13 and up. At first people would ask me if my father worked there, and when I said no, they looked at me as if to say, "This kid has to be joking." But now it's different. The director will show me how to work something (once) and then say, "Figure it out and then show other people how to do it." Then he walks away. I scrub, nail, paint, build, and show people around the exhibits. Eli Whitney lets me learn about the world and the way things work.

For the past two years I have been helping out at WPKN, a radio station. I've been helping out with phones and pledge money. Also last year I read stories to a nursery school class. The teachers said the kids paid more attention to me than they did to them. Sometimes they played games based on the stories I just read.

Working on a Political Campaign

13-year-old Julia Dinner of Ontario sent us a paper she wrote about working on a local political campaign. Some excerpts:

Let me first describe how I became involved in the election campaign of Tony Ianno. It all started one early morning (around 9:00 AM which is early for my aunt) in October, when my aunt called me and asked me if I would like to do some work at the campaign office. A few days passed and then I finally called her back to say that I was all ready. The next morning at 10:00 she arrived, picked me up, and off we went ... My first impression of the campaign office was that I had walked into a zoo. People were everywhere doing everything from sitting and having a drink of coffee to climbing the walls. As I was marched through the jungle of people, I was introduced to them, every one of them, even the ones who were on the phones. The very next place I was to go was the smallest, stuffiest, smokiest, hottest place in the whole office and it was the place that I would be working in for the next ten days. ...

I have found that a lot of my

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friends think of candidates as people who run the show, and that is a misconception. The people who run the whole campaign office are the people who have been on a campaign before, are friendly with all the people in the office, know all the names of the hundreds of people who run in and out of the office, and have nerves of steel. ...

While on the campaign I did a little bit of everything except telephone canvassing. What I did most of the time was data processing because I quite like working on computers. On the day of the election I went with my aunt to the polling station we were supposed to watch, and she signed me in as a "liberal agent" (otherwise known as a scrutineer) so that I could make sure that the Elections Canada people were doing their jobs and that people who were dead, moved, under age, not Canadian citizens, etc., didn't vote.

... During the ten days that I worked on the campaign I had a lot of fun and hope to do it again. It's addictive – once you've been there for one day, you're there till the end.

Helps on Christmas Tree Farm

Selena Dittberner (MN) writes:

We live on a Christmas tree farm and nursery. In the spring my dad digs, balls, and burlaps trees. I help with tying and crimping before the trees are loaded onto the trailer. In the summer we prune the trees. I top the main leader and sometimes stake the top with a bamboo stick. In August we dig more trees. In the fall we collect pinecones for the wreaths and garlands we make and decorate. In November we cut and bale Christmas trees that we ship out to other tree lots. During the winter we work on the computer for customer bulk mailings.

My favorite time is when we choose, cut, and sell Christmas trees, because then I can operate the cash register. We have free horse-drawn sleigh rides and hot apple cider for our customers and coloring books for the children. It's fun to work with my friends who are also homeschooling.

Learning Languages

Donna Faturos of Pennsylvania writes:

I read with interest Ruth Freedman's letter in GWS #94 regarding her daughter Abi's interest in languages and Abi's dismay about her college experience. I have studied six languages, five at the university level, and I do agree with some of the criticisms Abi levels against college language study. I, too, found that there were limited opportunities to speak languages in normal, everyday situations, so I sought out people in my community in order to practice. In this respect, Susannah's suggestions are very good. However, I think that they don't go far enough.

I am assuming that Abi would, at some point, like to have a job that involves using another language. By and large, this will require that she not only speak this language but be literate in it. By that I mean be able to speak colloquial language as well as more formal speech (and to understand the situations when each should be properly used), be able to read and understand not only newspapers and the like but also more technical or specialized materials, and be able to express herself clearly in writing.

This last point is one where I found my college training to be invaluable. It is not easy to translate a good grasp of spoken language into a good ability to write in that language, for several reasons. First, people generally speak far more informally than they write. Grammar rules essential for good writing are often relaxed (or ignored) in spoken language. Even a personal letter to a good friend is likely to be written more carefully than, say, the same information given during a phone conversation. Second, other languages and cultures have certain formalities in writing that an educated person recognizes and respects; using them identifies the writer as an educated individual. We sometimes forget this in other languages because we do it automatically in English. Also, if Abi is interested in translating, she will need to have excellent *English* grammar

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skills.

Finding people who are native speakers of another language is not too difficult. Even in my rural community there are folks who speak German, French, Italian, and Chinese fluently. Finding an individual who can help not only with conversational practice but also with the particulars of proper written language is quite something else. I admit that at the time I found more than a few of my college language classes boring and in some cases irrelevant. But looking back, I realize how valuable a learning experience they really were.

I wish that I had some wonderful suggestion for acquiring these skills easily. Alas, other than befriending a willing professor or other professional, I have none. While reading quality literature in other languages is a good way to expose yourself to fine writing, feedback from a knowledgeable person is very important.

Leaving School in 9th Grade

Ivy Loftberg of Wisconsin writes:

I clearly remember, in seventh grade, accidentally enjoying myself while writing a history essay. In the school I attended it was an absolute taboo to enjoy oneself while learning. I knew it was customary to groan when the class was assigned to read an entire chapter for class, but occasionally I would get lost in the words and be truly fascinated by the subject. Of course, I thought there was something grotesquely wrong with me. Enjoy learning? This was the greatest sin.

I also remember an assignment we had in eighth grade, which was to write a diary by a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Students would go to the podium to read, but would leave much of their wonderful detail out in fear of being labeled a "geek" or a "brain" (creativity was another taboo). My diary was long and very detailed. I felt ashamed reading my work, especially when I heard groans from my peers because I was taking too long. I sat down, wishing I hadn't read it.

I found myself struggling to express myself in school, but also fearing to do so in the horror of being pushed out by my peers. The only peace I found in school was through writing. But this was also taken away when the writing was picked apart and graded. It stifled my creativity rather than helped it to bloom, because I learned how to write for the teacher instead of for myself. In group assignments it was worse. Most of the students said "I don't care" and closed their minds. Obviously, I was only learning how to suppress and mold myself to fit appropriately into the system. My mental and physical health were fading fast. I had to find a way out.

This past summer, the idea of homeschooling played on my mind. I hadn't heard much about it, but I despised the idea of spending four more years in an oppressive school system. My mom and I began to research the possibility of homeschooling. Things began fitting into place, as if this adventure was meant to be. The decision was made that I would try the first semester of ninth grade at home. Of course, I was very scared, despite my relief and excitement. It was like learning to walk and think independently. For eight years I had been held back, told how to think, how to work, how to belong, how to live, and then in a matter of a few weeks, I found myself without external standards. I found I actually loved to learn. I had a thirst that was finally going to be quenched, and it was for knowledge. I felt like an infant, discovering the world for the first time. It was frightening, but I wasn't about to turn back.

Remembering that first week still gives me chills. I had years of controlled learning still in my psyche and I structured my homeschooling to have each subject 50 minutes long; I even used a timer. The clock ticking away made me nervous, as if I had to get this knowledge in before the timer stopped. I felt as if I were still in school, worse almost because I was supposed to be free. But I was a prisoner of my own conditioning. With the help of my mom, I gradually weaned myself from this controlled self-teaching, by understanding that learning has to come naturally and that I can learn to trust this natural director.

I stopped using the timer but immersed myself in book work. I wanted to try and do every subject every day. At first this was easy because for eight years I had been deprived of things I yearned to know. Months later, I got a puppy and entered an entirely new level of learning besides the disciplined book work. Ziggy, my companion Pug, was and always will be my greatest and most demanding teacher. She taught me patience, persistence, routine, and, most of all, responsibility. I had to think of her above anything else. My adventures with her were worth more than an entire semester of schooling.

I remember the important lesson

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of sticking firmly with something until it is through, which I learned when Ziggy had a serious eye injury. For two weeks, I had to hold her, exercise her, settle her when she became too rough, and be by her side as she slept. It was one thing I put my complete heart and soul into. It was deeply educational, beyond anything that could be read in a book and filled out in a worksheet. I know she couldn't be in my life if I were going to school. This is one thing that still keeps me going when it gets a little rough, because she has made my life very full.

After Ziggy, I began doing an equal amount of experiential learning, as well as book work. I got a job and began to go on many important field trips. Recently I started an herb garden and am writing for a teenage environment club called Aware. I have lots of plans brewing in my newly discovered mind. I'm almost at the end of the first semester of ninth grade, and it amazes me how much I have already learned. I think of all the experiences that wouldn't have been possible sitting behind a desk. When I broke free from the school system and from my own educational conditioning, I discovered my true intelligent, creative, and spontaneous self. I still struggle a bit with letting my old schooling go, but it hasn't discouraged me yet.

One important tool in all of this was, and still is, the library. Without it, it would have been very difficult to learn the way I wanted to, independently. I found self-study guides, textbooks, videos, audio tapes, and wonderfully detailed books on any subject imaginable. Each time I go there, I know I am on a path of discovery and freedom.

I believe that nearly every person on this planet has the ability to know what they have to learn. Imagine what prosperous, peaceful, and joyful beings we would all be if left to discover the world on our own instead of simply being told about it. We'd know how to expand our minds, use our creativity, and live up to our human potential. The world would be filled with beings whose lives were full, because they would have grasped real knowledge and discovery.

Learning at 4

Alida Cynric of Wisconsin writes:

The way I homeschool Edward (now 4 1/2) will be a natural outgrowth of the way we already live. There is already quite a bit Edward does that could be called school-type learning, but it is at his own instigation. I'm not teaching him or "preparing him for homeschooling." I am a pretty enthusiastic person, and so is he. We both view life as an exciting journey. I'll give a few examples.

He first began recognizing letters at age 2 and began writing just before he turned 3. It was completely out of the blue, while we were using sidewalk chalk one day. I was stunned. In the past few months, reading and writing have really caught fire for him.

He also loves numbers. Last spring he discovered *My First Number Book*, by Dorling Kindersley, at the library. I had to buy it for him.

Finally, the February 1993 issue of *National Geographic* included an article on Venus and her volcanoes. Edward was so enthusiastic that I had to write a letter, which the magazine then published in the June issue. As a result, last month we received a letter from an architect-town planner in Manila. He sent photos of the active Philippine volcano, Taal, and a packet of ash from Mt. Pinatubo. Edward was thrilled. I was somewhat amazed.

I have two more years before Edward is old enough for us to have to comply with Wisconsin's homeschooling law, but I don't look on it as a before-and-after situation. We're already homeschooling.

Finding Groups for a Young Child

N.S. Gill of Minnesota writes:

Providing my son with opportunities to play with other children was a major concern for me when my son was a toddler and "preschooler." He was almost an only child – he has two half sisters but his contact with them has always been limited and hampered by the 6- and 9-year age gap. Our neighborhood is not friendly – only

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occasionally do you see children playing outside. But there are various parks within walking distance.

We tried going to the park on a fairly regular basis in clement weather. This provided some opportunity to play with other children, but we never knew whether anyone would show up and when we wound up alone my son was always very disappointed. Many years later we found a group of mothers and children who came to one of the parks a few days a week at noon for the free summer lunches, but by this time my son was no longer a "preschooler."

For the Minnesota winters we needed indoor opportunities for social interaction. Were we starting out today, we would join the home-schooling group that meets weekly in the gym at a neighborhood park, but in the '80s there were none that we knew of. The neighborhood parks did have other programs, which were inexpensive. For the younger years they were called Tiny Tots and for the older preschool years, Kindertots. We tried the programs out at two parks.

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The first one was a wonderful experience. The teacher had recently returned from a year spent in India. She was very concerned with health and would not let the parents provide snacks with sugar. On nice days she would take the children out of the building to play or to feed the ducks at the lake. On other days she would try to engage the children in crafts projects, which she was more than usually qualified to teach, being an artist by profession. Parents were welcome at this class. My son enjoyed it and he enjoyed the sustained friendship with the three other children in the class. Unfortunately, the class was supposed to have had at least twenty children and it lasted for only one session because of the lack of enrollment.

Having had a good experience there, we decided to try another park's program. Although the name was the same, the program was entirely different. The teachers' philosophy was that it was a preschool. The objective of the class was to teach the children to cut and paste and learn letters. This was not written in the brochure for the class, but it was still the agenda.

The major thing that bothered me about the class was that it was considered a training period for school although, as I said, it had not been so described. Thus, my son was to be left at the door, and I was to disappear. Having promised my son I would stay there, I did. After a couple of classes, one of the teachers asked me why I stayed. After I explained, she said (with what I can only consider disrespect for my son) that my son was fine and that I should just go. Another example of the socialization of the class that bothered me was the fact that the children were instructed to line up in sex-segregated lines and then to "behave like ladies and gentlemen." I did not believe that such sex-role stereotyping was appropriate for 4 and 5 year olds.

We tried two other activities: Early Childhood Family Education programs and public library programs. ECFE programs are run by some governmental agency in public school buildings. Their avowed purposes include teaching parents to parent. There are some nice things that the programs provide: a break from childcare, a free toy-lending library, a possible social network for one's children, free classes with various supplies. But these things do not begin to offset the negatives, in my mind. There were so many written and unwritten rules and codes of behavior that I could not feel comfortable. Criticism or any form of negativity was verboten. The leaders would not tell me (or others) that they did not want my son to throw around the large, colorful balls that littered the floor. Somehow I was supposed to intuit that this behavior was inappropriate. If I didn't know (as I didn't), I was supposed to pick up on the cues from the wrinkled brows of administrators. If I still didn't get it I could hear the administrators gossiping about the bad behavior of certain parents.

Just as I have nothing but bad memories of ECFE classes, so I have almost nothing but fond memories of the free library programs. We did have to do some hunting to find a librarian who was open to childish squirming, but once we did, we stuck with the weekly reading programs from the time my son was 3 until he was 7. He still likes to sit in on the sessions occasionally and has made a lasting friendship with the children's librarian.

I would suggest that there is nothing wrong with trying out a variety of programs. My son enjoyed almost all the opportunities he had to play with other children. If we had had the money, we would have tried out some of the Y programs, but I believe it is very important to avoid spending so much money on any one program that you would feel guilty about quitting.

Wins Contest With Photo of Baby Brother

Ruth Matilsky (NJ) sent us a very positive article about her family's home-schooling that a reporter wrote for their town's newspaper. From the article:

Jacob Matilsky learned recently that he is a winner for the second time in a national photography contest. An avid photographer, he owns some 30 cameras. He also practices the Tae

kwon do form of karate, plays the guitar and enjoys a game of basketball. Not bad for someone who is only 11 years old.

The Highland Park youngster received second prize in the August 1993 Cricket League international photography competition sponsored by *Cricket* magazine for children, which has a circulation of 100,000. His entry was submitted in the 10-14 year old category when he was still 10 years old. He previously was a first place winner in the 5-9 year old age bracket.

Jacob's subject for the August entry was his little brother, Loren, then 8 months old. Taking Loren's picture at that time was a challenge because "he doesn't smile and he doesn't sit," Jacob said. The young photographer finally got the baby to do both.

... Jacob became interested in photography at age 8. "He pestered me for a camera and I finally gave him one," said his father, Terry Matilsky, a photography enthusiast and professor of physics at Rutgers University.

... The five Matilsky children [began homeschooling] because their parents decided they could learn more on an individual basis than in a school system. ... The parents want to foster creativity through homeschooling, "to allow exploration," their father said...

Updates from Grown-Up Homeschoolers

You'll see on page 37 that we've begun keeping a list of grown-up homeschoolers, in college or working, who are willing to answer others' questions. As these former homeschoolers or their parents wrote to us agreeing to be on the list, some also sent notes telling us what they were up to:

From Amber Clifford: "I am beginning college in January. I am going to attend Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg. I'll be living on campus, but any letters can be addressed home. I am a history major, and I have been admitted to the Honors Program. I am working at the CMSU Museum preparing an exhibit for the spring. I recently completed cataloging the library at the Nance Museum and will work there again in March. I plan to get a PhD in history and go into museum work and teaching."

From Mary Ann Cauthen, mother of Rebecca Cauthen: "I am happy to send you Becky's address and for the opportunity to affirm homeschooling, especially organic, unstructured, interest-directed styles of learning. We had no grades, diploma, etc., but merely wrote descriptions of Becky's character, how she learned, areas of interests, etc. This, along with proof of the GED, SAT scores, and applications, was sent to three colleges (two state and one private) and Becky (now preferring Rebecca!) was accepted and awarded scholarships in piano at all three. She is now attending Shorter College in Rome, Georgia, and is doing well. Her schedule is very heavy and she has A's and B's. She has had no adjustment problems, and in fact has been instrumental in helping homesick, unprepared, public-school-educated suitemates adjust to being away from home and being independent. I greatly miss homeschooling days! Thank you for the support and encouragement you provided. I still go back and read old GWS issues and John Holt's and Nancy Wallace's books."

And from Esther Lillemoe, whose daughter, Sarah Pitts, told about going to Boston College in GWS #96: "At a Freshman Sendoff here in Atlanta [before college began], everyone asked where students had graduated from high school. Most of the others were from the 'top' private schools here. We got a lot of surprised looks when Sarah said, 'I was home-

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schooled' (pause, lots of blank looks) – 'My mom taught me at home.' Then they would look at me like I was some amazing individual. Quickly I would try to explain that Sarah had really taught herself. Of course, I'm not sure they had a chance to fully comprehend. It was an interesting experience."

Developing Interest in Engineering

Chris Northam of Maryland sent us a copy of an essay he wrote as part of his college applications, called "Why I Plan to Earn an Engineering Degree." Some excerpts:

Since my childhood I have had a fascination with how things work, and activities that most interested me usually involved designing, building, or maintaining mechanical devices. Because of homeschooling, I was able to become intensely involved in many of those activities and projects. When I was around 12 years old my grandfather taught me how to work on small engines, which has been a great asset to me. I have been able to repair and build items ranging from motor-scooters to cars, and I have also sold many of the items that I built.

I established my own lawn care business at the age of 13; today it continues to grow in size. Because of the money that I have earned doing lawn care and [because of] the support of my parents, I was able to race motocross. For three years I raced all over the east coast. During the time I raced, I advanced from novice to expert class and learned how to do all the maintenance on my motorcycles. However, when I was 15 I made the decision to give up racing because I could not afford to race and to pursue my interest in flying at the same time.

Scuba Diving is another area that interests me. When I was fairly young I used a bucket and an air compressor to build a diving helmet. It worked well, but it was difficult to use except in pools. When I turned 13, the minimum age to become certified, I earned my Open Water Certification. The following year I earned my Advanced [and] then my Rescue Diver Certification. I am now working on earning a Dive Master rating. I have used my diving skills mainly for enjoyment; however, I have also used them to perform community service. I have helped a non-profit organization that owns boats by doing underwater maintenance that requires the use of scuba gear.

From as far back as I can remember I have had a love of flying. When I was young I used to make model airplanes all the time and climb trees to imagine the day when I would be able to soar above them. When I was around 10 years old, I designed plans for a full-scale aircraft and tried to construct it. Due to the high cost of materials and a few other problems, I never saw the completion of that aircraft. However, when I was 12 I had saved up enough money to buy the materials to build a radio-controlled aircraft. Three months later I had completed the construction of my first plane. It was not an attractive airplane, but it flew well. Four months after my first flight, I received my R.C. pilot certification. Over the past five years I built three more planes and I still enjoy taking a break from school to fly these models. As I became older, however, I wanted to be able to actually fly in the plane. I joined the Civil Air Patrol to become closer to people who have similar interests in aviation. Then when I turned 16 I joined the aero club at Andrews Air Force Base. I chose to fly out of an air force base so I could become accustomed to a busy environment and learn to speak to air traffic controllers. Within a few months I earned my student pilot license. I worked and studied hard for over a year and when I turned 17, the minimum age to become certified, I earned my private pilot license.

Explaining Homeschooling to Colleges

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock (PA), who has just begun to attend the University of Pennsylvania's College of General Studies, sent us copies of her answers to some of the questions on the application. These answers may be useful to others who are trying to explain their nontraditional background to colleges (or employers). The College of General Studies is a program that allows students (many of whom are adults) to take classes part-time, and this appealed to Amanda because she wanted to take some college classes but didn't want to have to give up her job or her other activities.

Do you believe your transcripts and other records present an accurate picture of your ability? Explain fully.

As a homeschooler whose education has been shaped in large part by self-direction and apprenticeships, I have no formal transcript. My level of success has always been gauged by self-evaluation and the direct feedback from those who have seen my work.

For example, when I conduct a workshop focusing on my educational experiences and philosophy, the response of my audience helps me to evaluate and improve my presentation. When an adult friend and I visit area elementary schools to give booktalks on children's literature, I use both the children's and my partner's reactions to refine my work.

Obviously, my education has been non-traditional, and as a result, I've had the opportunity to base my studies in my areas of serious interest. I have not needed grades to motivate me to do well because the real-work element of my activities makes grades superfluous.

In lieu of a transcript, I have attached a recent employee evaluation from my job and a personal letter from the superintendent of schools for Radnor Township.

Write a brief essay describing your academic and personal goals and how these will be furthered by studying at Penn.

I've always had a strong interest – some would say fascination – with the area of study traditionally known as English. I was an early and voracious reader, and I continue to read an extremely wide variety of material.

I am currently employed part time at Ludington Library, working both in the Junior Room (where I've been for nearly five years) and the Processing Center. I enjoy both of these positions because they allow me to do what I love best – work with words.

I am hoping for and working

toward a career somewhere in my area of interest – whether it be as a writer, editor, or something else in the publishing world; as a multi-media specialist (i.e., librarian); or some other position now unknown to me.

I want to achieve my goal by studying with and learning from people who love what they do, and I think Penn will help me reach that goal. I love my present work, and want to continue, with the firm conviction that I will gain much knowledge on the job. However, I also want to become part of an intellectually stimulating community of peers and professors. Additionally, I look forward to the possibility of new internships.

I'm heartened by Penn's open door policy, which invites students with non-traditional backgrounds to participate in the "intellectual heart" of an Ivy League school. The sum total of my library work, course work, new apprenticeships and independent studies would help me achieve a college degree, which I know would open still more doors for me.

I'm happy to contribute to the "spirit of learning" at Penn by being a representative of a non-traditional group – homeschoolers – and hopefully showing by my own example that education happens in many ways.

Have you had any non-academic experience which you feel strengthens your application?

In a manner of speaking, my whole life has been a non-academic experience – if one defines "academic" as "school." I've been entirely homeschooled. (I use this term because it is the most common one; I much prefer to define my educational experience as self-directed.)

Through the years, I've held volunteer positions at a nature center, with an environmental group, at a residence for the physically and mentally handicapped, at a family resource center, and at a library. This last has evolved into a paying job. Though my job title is Page (a position which traditionally involves shelving of books with minimal room for growth), in actuality I process books, train new employees, answer reference questions, deal on a regular basis with our multi-cultural and always unique patrons, and continue to use Inlex (our computer system) to search, catalogue, and maintain records. My family's educational philosophy is, "Benefit from access to the real world. Do community service. Have mentor/apprenticeships. Learn by doing."

I've played in a violin quintet for five years, performing over 150 concerts in nursing and retirement homes, for various community organizations, and for tour groups at the White House. Through the quintet, I've had the opportunity to: observe some of the complexities and challenges of old age, become accustomed to adapting to new situations in a short period of time, learn to anticipate and understand the goals and interests of different audiences, and hone my scheduling, planning, and organizational skills.

I've also been a member of a professional dance company, taken non-credit courses in subjects such as sign language, history, and genealogy, and published essays on my experiences as a homeschooler.

Because of my unique upbringing, I've been interviewed in numerous print, radio, and television articles and spots. I've become accustomed to speaking succinctly and diplomatically in these situations and continue to try to cultivate my ability to present my point of view in as positive a fashion as possible. I've learned much about the behind-the-scenes workings of journalism and news organizations and have thoroughly enjoyed the process.

Finally, I've been involved in legislative activity, working for the passage of Act 169 (Pennsylvania's homeschooling law). I testified before the House Committee on Education and addressed invited senators and representatives at a legislative breakfast. I've led or co-led several conference workshops on educational alternatives and philosophies. The audiences I've appeared before include Rotary International, La Leche League, Mid-Atlantic Homeschoolers, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Tenth International Conference on Technology and Education.

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Focus

When Kids Ask to Homeschool

These interviews are with teenagers who asked to homeschool and the parents who had to respond to that request.

Drawing Up a Proposal

Interview with Allison Crawford:

How did you get the idea that you could leave school?

I was at a church youth conference in Baltimore, and Dawn Shuman, a homeschooler from Philadelphia, led a workshop about how you could homeschool. The idea just *really* appealed to me, because I've always been an independent person.

How old were you at the time?

Sixteen.

Do you remember what parts of the idea appealed to you?

The fact that I wouldn't have to wake up at 6:00 in the morning! And I figured I could learn a lot more by myself, because I wouldn't have to deal with slow classes and the impersonality of school.

Did you have any concerns about homeschooling at that time, when you first heard about it?

Well, Dawn lent me *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* by Grace Llewellyn, and I read through the whole thing in six hours. I was all psyched to tell my parents that I had it all worked out. After the church conference I usually just go to sleep because I'm exhausted, but this time I set the alarm and woke up early the next day so I could go the library and research the Maryland laws. I wanted to be able to give a full presentation to my parents, without them being able to say, "Do you know this?" and me having to say no.

At that point, before you brought up the idea with them, did you have an idea of how they would react?

I figured they would be supportive but that they would have a lot of questions about it, and a bunch of qualms, like – there's a scholarship that my father's work gives to all children of employees, if their grades through their junior year, combined with their SAT scores, come out to a certain number. So I knew I needed grades through my junior year to get that scholarship, and that would be a big problem if I stopped going to school.

What happened when you made the presentation to your parents?

After I found out what all the laws were, I sat both my parents down at the kitchen table. I had a whole typed-out outline, and I gave each of them a copy. In the outline, I had an introduction that said that the public schools are bad, and this is how they're bad, and this is how I'm not doing well there and how I'm wasting my time. Then I went on and described how homeschooling would work, and I said it would require no time commitment on their part, because I was old enough now to study on my own. I outlined all the laws, and I had xeroxed the homeschooling law from the book in the library.

Were you able to say anything about what you wanted to do in homeschooling? I know a lot of kids aren't even sure what they want to do...

I knew, number one, that I had a whole shelf of books at home that I hadn't read because my English class didn't give me any time to read books that weren't in the curriculum. I was getting really frustrated with that, and I knew that the first thing I wanted to do was sit down and read those books. After that, I was just going to take it step by step, depending on what happened. I did give my parents a little bit of a course outline, saying this is what I could do for science, this is what I could do for social studies. For science, I was going to plant my garden – although I later killed that with my kiss-of-death thumb! – and I was really interested in physics at the time, and my mom and dad were both physics majors so we had a lot of physics texts around. We talked about how I could use those books. Basically, I was trying to finish out my junior year with the same courses I had started in.

Did your parents seem surprised by your proposal?

I think so. Their biggest concern, though, was about how I would be able to get that scholarship. I also went to my guidance counselor at school to talk about this, and his reaction was, "What's homeschooling?" He didn't know anything about it, but he called me down a couple of days later and gave me a packet of GED information. Then my mom and I met with the principal and vice-principal, and I said, "What do you know about ways I can get out?" They said, "If you want to get out of public school, you really need psychological help." They thought I wasn't coping well. I wasn't dealing with the classes, so if I got a psychologist to say I was unable to attend school, I could get out. So I said, "OK, let's try this path." I actually went to two appointments with a psychologist. She took a very conventional view. She asked me why I didn't like school, and I said, "The classes are really slow, I feel like I'm just wasting my time." It seemed like her goal was to get me to go back to school, or there was also the option of home study, which meant having a tutor come to my house. That was the next best thing to homeschooling in my eyes – it was still better than being in school.

But meanwhile, I wasn't letting any options drop, so I also talked to Dawn Shuman again, and she gave me the number of Manfred Smith [homeschooling leader in Maryland]. When I talked to him, he gave me a whole different way of looking at it. My parents and I went to his house for a meeting, and he explained that he could give me grades and a diploma through The Learning Community Network [an umbrella school]. So that satisfied my parents. Then I wanted to know, how soon can I get out? According to Maryland law, you have to give the school two weeks' notice. Manfred said if I dropped off the appropriate papers at the Board of Education, and got my transcript from the school, I wouldn't have to go back to school that Monday. When we went to the Board of Education to get all the paperwork settled, my mother said, "Friday will be her last day," and they reminded us about the two-week waiting period. My mom said, "Well, she *is* 16," because it was actually legal for me to drop out. So that took care of that.

What about the big concern about social life that so many people have? Did that come up in your family at all?

The school was very cliquey, and I had my clique of friends. Out of those people, I've kept in touch with everyone I really liked, without a problem. And I didn't have to keep up with the people that I didn't like. That was another reason I wanted to get out of school; there was a lot of stuff going on that I didn't want to be a part of, like all my friends were starting to smoke and drink, and there were all these - not exactly gangs, but cliques that would fight each other.

What was it like when you first started homeschooling?

That first semester, my parents kept asking, "What have you done today?" Finally I got sick of that, so I wrote a weekly newsletter that I titled *What*, and it told about what I'd done. That worked out really well.

Now that you've been out of school a year, how do you feel it's gone?

Well, I didn't read the whole shelf of books, but it's been interesting, all the different things that you can call homeschooling. My sister and I went to Europe for a month, and that counted as Language, it counted as Social Studies, and it was just the best time. We went through September, so I never could have done it if I'd been in school.

Do you have any advice for kids who want to homeschool and find that their parents are unsure about it?

Well, I'm actually giving a workshop on that at our next conference. I'm going to bring *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, and I'm just going to tell them what's possible. If their parents have concerns or fears, I'd say most of the time the fear is either based on the fact that they don't think the child will do well enough, and I think the only way to conquer that is to talk to your parents a lot and show them that you're responsible. Or the fear is just based on the fact that they don't know anything about it, since people are always afraid of what they don't know, and the thing to do is to give them as much information as possible.

My mom and I met with the principal and vice-principal, and I said, "What do you know about ways I can get out?" They said, "If you want to get out of public school, you really need psychological help."

Concerned about College Scholarship

Interview with Sue Crawford, Allison's mother:

How did it strike you when Allison first presented the idea of homeschooling?

At first it struck me as undoable, but then she convinced us that it would probably work. I don't think this would work with every child that old. Neither I nor her father had much time to devote to her homeschooling; we both work full time, and we're separated now. Again, it

depends on the child, but we took a chance, and it seems to have worked out very well.

What made it seem unworkable at first?

Mostly the fact that I didn't know too much about homeschooling. I feared that she wouldn't get that scholarship, and that she wouldn't be able to get into college. But we did a little research, and I called some college admissions officers to find out about homeschoolers. They assured me that yes, they did accept them, and they told me the criteria that they used. Meanwhile, Allison was very adamant about not going back to her high school. We could have just said, "Go back, or else," but we figured we'd give her the opportunity to try this out. She did have some other options – we have a program here that lets you go right into college after your junior year, if you're a good student, and if you finish your first year of college successfully, you get your high school diploma. The principal was willing to do that for her because she was in the Gifted and Talented program and doing really well, but she didn't want to do that. We offered private school, and she didn't want to do that either. She absolutely didn't want to finish her junior year at school.

Did those other options seem preferable to you at the time?

Yes, they did. Again, it was fear of the unknown. I had no idea how homeschooling would work out, and I wasn't sure how the colleges would feel about it.

Since you're leaving so much of the responsibility of homeschooling up to her, do you ever worry that you don't know enough of what she's doing?

I don't keep careful tabs on her. Every now and then I ask her what she's doing and make sure she's on track, but mostly I'm leaving it up to her, because we trust her.

Did people ask you questions about homeschooling?

A lot of people were curious, but it was pretty easy to talk about. Another one of Allison's peers is thinking of doing the same thing. What I say to people is that this isn't for everybody. Unless you're willing to devote a lot of your time to it, this is for a kid who is very motivated, a self-starter. Allison was very adamant, and she had always been a very good kid. She had never given us any trouble, and she'd always been very responsible. So I saw it as a two-way street: if she was good to us, we needed to meet some of her needs also.

Suppose a child hadn't been such a "good kid" all along, but then presented the case that she believed she would do better out of school, that school had been part of the problem. Would you be convinced by that?

I would certainly give it a try. I think you'd have to monitor someone like that more closely than we've been doing with Allison, but I would give them a chance.

Doing Well in School, but Not Happy

Interview with Andrew Endsley:

How did you learn about homeschooling?

It was in January of my freshman year in high school. I had transferred to a parochial school that year, thinking that it would be better than the public school I had been in. After the new year I had passed through the stage of everything being new, and I realized that this school was just as boring as the school I'd left. We had heard about an article in the *Toledo Blade* about a Christian family that was being prosecuted for not informing the state about their homeschooling. The judge threw the case out, saying that the school was wrong for denying the family the option of homeschooling, but also chastising the family, saying you do have some responsibility to report your activities to the state. Both sides came out of the situation looking poorly, but for us, it alerted us to something that we hadn't thought of before.

So, once you'd heard about this option, what did you do?

Well, I was still in school, so that occupied most of my time. I didn't have the time or the resources at that point to research homeschooling myself, so I left it up to my mother to discover how this might work. I had already come to the conclusion that if it was going to be "school at home," or some sort of correspondence course, I wanted nothing to do with it, because that seemed just as boring and tiring as what I was experiencing in school. I never thought that school was centered on something that I could really enjoy. As far as the game of getting good grades went, I knew how to do that, but my major task in

school was trying to minimize the amount of effort that I put into it. In the classes that I did enjoy, like history, I found that when we did touch on something that sparked my interest, we could never stay on it long enough.

Did you have any idea, then, of what you wanted to do outside of school?

No, I really didn't. It was all so foreign. Once my mother had read several articles and John Holt's books, she came to me and said that homeschooling didn't have to be school-at-home, and even those who did school-at-home didn't spend as many hours a day as people in school spent.

How did your mother seem to react when you first brought up the idea of homeschooling?

I think it surprised her because I had made the move to a new school, and things did seem to be going well. My grades were good. A couple of weeks after I first asked her about homeschooling, I asked her again if she had found anything, and she hadn't. Maybe she didn't know how seriously to take it, but after the second time I asked, I think she began more actively to ask questions and to go to the library to find out more.

Were you able to explain to your parents why you weren't happy in school?

I think they were becoming aware of my dislike for it. I mean, I was doing well, but that was a facade. My experience had all the trappings of a successful education, but I think they could tell that I was reclusive and unhappy.

What would you suggest to teenagers who have a harder time explaining to parents why school isn't working for them?

I guess a beginning point would be to somehow show your parents that the work you're doing in school is rather menial - not that the information is unimportant, necessarily, but that the task of regurgitating it is a waste of your time. And I would think that a lot of parents – or teachers, or the government, for that matter – want to see some sort of result, they want to know what would happen otherwise. You know, if you're not in school, are you watching cartoons all day, or is there something else that would capture your interest? Or is there some way to show that you *need* this free time to discover what you're interested in, what you're good at?

My father's initial reaction to the idea was, "Absolutely not! How is this going to work, what are people going to think?" It took finding respectable articles in well-known newspapers that he was familiar with, that showed the positive aspects of homeschooling. Once he realized that it was not a crackpot scheme that would damage his children, but rather would free them up to explore, then he was willing to read in more depth. Then he wanted to see homeschooling in action, before he gave a final verdict. By this time there were only two or three weeks left of that school year, and the question was, why not just stick it out the rest of the year? But once I knew that the grades for that quarter weren't going to matter, I stopped doing the work entirely. So for two weeks, my grades that had been A's and B's suddenly turned into C's and D's and potential F's, and we got these frantic calls from teachers saying, "Something's happening, Andy's really slipping." I'm sure the teachers were quite shocked by my mother's response, because we knew that those grades would mean nothing. I had essentially stopped playing the game. So we decided just to start homeschooling then. It was a weird feeling to wake up at the time that I would normally catch the bus, and sort of being half awake and half asleep, listening to the roar of the bus get closer and then leave without me on it. I think that was kind of a turning point for me.

How did your father gradually come around?

Well, we had all driven up to the Clonlara Home Based Education Program in Michigan and met with the director, Pat Montgomery, and I'm sure my parents barraged her with questions. She said that anything I did through Clonlara would be transferrable if I ever wanted to go back to school, and I think that allayed a lot of my parents' fears.

What was your homeschooling like in the beginning?

Gradually we realized that anything I did, regardless of where, or at what time of day, could be counted, but we were kind of walking around with a stopwatch, saying, "OK, we have fifteen minutes of math here, and an hour and a half of reading Charles Dickens over there." After about a month we all realized that the work I was doing when we weren't watching the stopwatch was just as valuable, so we started approximating how much time I'd spent on various subjects. In doing that we probably lost some time that

didn't get recorded, but in the grand scheme of things it wasn't that important.

In an earlier issue of GWS you told us about your involvement with film. When did that begin?

After my first year of homeschooling, A Civil War reenactment unit that I belonged to was asked to participate in the movie *Glory*, and it was during a school week, so if I'd been in school I would never have been able to do it. During that period my father made friends with the makeup artist for the film, and later, when we were visiting him, he told us about another Civil War movie and said, "Since you're into this sort of thing, you might want to look into it." We met the guy who was involved in hiring the reenactors, and a couple of months later I started work on *Dances With Wolves*. Now, four years later, I'm working as an assistant director. Before I left school, I didn't even know

Some people thought that there was something wrong with our son for being so miserable in school – that there was something wrong with him, not with the system.

this was a possibility, and if I was still following that path, this would be my sophomore year in college. Knowing what I know now, I think it would have been much more difficult if I had gone to college and then come to Los Angeles to pursue this work. It would have taken at least the same amount of time – another four years – to get to where I am now. But I don't think it would have been as easy, because since I was doing the work while I was still a teenager, I had my parents' support and financial assistance.

Finding Support and Information

Interview with Terri Endsley, Andrew's mother:

How did you react when Andrew asked you to investigate homeschooling?

I was very busy teaching private flute and piano lessons, and was also performing quite a bit, so I was working 40 to 50 hours a week. The last thing I thought I needed was something else to do. When Andrew asked me to look into homeschooling, I ignored him at first. Then when he asked me the second time, I went to the library to look into it. My thought was that I couldn't teach the high school subjects, that I'd have to learn them again myself because I didn't remember anything (even though I'd gotten good grades). The thought of having to learn it, and teach it to him, on top of a busy schedule, seemed impossible. I didn't think I'd do a good job, and I was sure we'd stymie his ability to get into a good college later on, which we expected him to want to do.

What did you think you would do about his request?

Well, I thought I would learn a little bit about it so I could go back to him and say, "I did look into it, and it's just as I thought, it's impossible for us to do for you at this time. You've got three more years; just stick it out." When I discovered GWS and Clonlara, and some articles in the paper, and rediscovered some of John Holt's books that I had read when the children were little, I realized that interest-directed learning was possible for high-school-aged students. I started to get very excited, and I kept sharing this literature with Andrew. He was reading the back issues of GWS, and he got excited too, but we had to convince Dan, his father.

What were his concerns?

He thought that I would have to teach the advanced subjects, or that we'd have to hire someone to do that, and that it wouldn't be as good as doing it in school. He thought that Andrew wouldn't have as many career possibilities later on, and that Andrew might become a lazy bum and not do anything. He also thought homeschooling was weird and anti-social, anti-community minded.

How did you address those concerns?

As Andrew said, news articles helped a lot – your booklet *Homeschooling in the News* helped a lot. The trip to Clonlara helped a lot too, because Dan saw that there was some sort of program supporting us.

For a while, though, Andrew kept saying, "I really want to do this," and I kept saying, "I think I can do this," and Dan was going, "How? When?" Then Dan started talking in terms of economics, and I explained that so much of what I was earning was going to the private school tuition, and if we didn't have to pay that, I could still do what I loved but I wouldn't have to work as many hours.

Yes, I think a lot of parents of teenagers are at the point where they finally feel able to devote themselves to their own work, and they would be reluctant to have to sacrifice that.

As it turned out, I didn't have to give up any of my work, because we found that Andrew was totally motivated since he was choosing what he wanted to learn about. So I didn't have to stay on top of him. We just had to juggle our schedules so that he could get to the opportunities that he

wanted to pursue. I worked at the same pace for two more years, and I gave it up only because when the kids got involved in film and started traveling with their father all over the country, I was missing out on all these wonderful trips. But that was my choice, and if the children had chosen activities closer to home, I could easily have continued with my studio. It was absolutely no conflict.

What about keeping in touch with what Andrew was doing? Did you feel any pressure to do that?

On a day-to-day basis maybe we weren't that involved, but week-to-week, or month-to-month, we actually had a lot more time to converse, and because we were all doing such interesting things, we enjoyed getting together to share what was happening. As we talked, Andrew would say, "Gee, I wish I could..." or Dan would say, "I was talking to someone and they said they'd be willing to show you..." or "I heard about this opportunity; are you interested?" and that would be how we would plan other activities. We had more time to converse in a friendly way, and that was important, because it wasn't just, "*Have* you done this?" or "Why did you get a C instead of an A?" And because we were keeping records, we did sit down at the end of the month and try to write up what they had done.

Lots of kids dislike school, but it's pretty radical to listen to your child enough to let him leave school when he asks to. How did you deal with other people's comments or questions about your decision?

Some people said, "You let your child talk you into this?" and others said, "You're nuts to be doing this." I think they thought we were letting our child be ruined, no matter how enthused we were about what was happening. I was so sure that when everyone found out they could do this, they would be excited, so it was quite a shock to realize that some people thought we were ruining him. Some people thought that there was something wrong with our son for being so miserable in school – that there was something wrong with *him*, not with the system. In those days, we lost a lot of friends. What made that tolerable, although it's still painful, is that we started a support group and were meeting and helping a lot of people, so we filled that social gap immediately. But I do get the feeling that the atmosphere is much more accepting now than it was six years ago. In Toledo, where we used to live, the support group is quite large and has gotten a lot of publicity. People tell us that they were in the grocery store on a school day and the clerk said in a very pleasant way, "I know, you must be homeschooling!"

It's sometimes easier for parents to believe that their child is unhappy in school when it looks more obvious – say, the grades are bad, or the child is an obvious troublemaker. Yet often we hear from kids who are like Andrew was, who are doing well superficially but are unhappy. Do you think you knew how he felt then?

We could see that he was depressed. When he started public school junior high, he became very unhappy, and so

Andrew Endsley in full Civil War regalia. Historical re-enactment, and ultimately involvement in historical films, became Andrew's chief interest once he was out of school.

we thought, "We'll put him in this top private school, and he'll meet more kids who are serious, like he is."

First of all, that wasn't true, and second of all the teaching was actually duller than in the public school, because I think the school had such a good reputation that they didn't worry about trying to be imaginative. So if anything, it got worse, which was a surprise to us. We were heartbroken that he was so miserable, but we didn't know what to do about it. At first we tossed around the idea of boarding school, but we didn't want that because we figured, they're going to be grown up and gone soon enough as it is. And we didn't know if it would be any better.

As I said, at first Dan wasn't at all sure about homeschooling; he was just giving in. For the first few weeks, we gave Andrew assignments, but he also kept track of what he did during the other times, and when I showed all this to Dan, he was able to see that what Andrew did during his spare time was much more worthwhile and exciting than what he did in the hour or two that we required him to sit down with traditional work. But also, Andrew's happiness made a big difference. That was what convinced the rest of the family, because they hadn't seen Andrew for a year, and he came in happy, and talkative, and very affectionate, and they all said, "What happened to Andrew? He's happy!" So that convinced them.

Neither School Nor Home — Finding a Third Alternative

Can teenagers leave school when their home lives are difficult and unwelcoming? What kinds of alternatives do they need?

Kathryn Miller Rudiman of Kentucky writes:

I read with empathy and interest Jamie Moore's letter in GWS #95. I too was a high school dropout, although I prefer to think of it now as having chosen to self-educate at 16.

My home life was absolutely chaotic. My parents were embroiled in a bitter divorce. My young sister lived with my mother; I lived with my father. We both attended a small parochial school – our third high school in two years. We had recently moved to a metropolitan suburb far from our extended family and friends in rural Kentucky. Our parents were neglectful and occasionally abusive. Although we had frequent absences from school, sometimes arrived with bruises, and often slept in class, none of the Sisters or other teachers questioned what was going on. I believe they preferred not to know. I was an excellent student in subjects that interested me, and an average student in those that did not. I was never a discipline problem.

My life was bizarre. At home I was battered and demeaned – or at best ignored. At school, I was an outsider, having a heavy Appalachian accent and a rural focus on life that was at odds with the other adolescents in my class. I had one close friend. My beautiful and vivacious sister, by contrast, was outgoing and popular. My real life, where I was competent, nurtured, and accepted, took place far from my school and family. At 15, I managed a suburban riding stable and was responsible for the care and feeding of 60 horses. I exchanged long days at the barn for free boarding for my two Arabian horses. (I had earned the money to purchase them myself by working at the stable and babysitting.)

This responsibility was heaven for a horse-crazy girl. I arrived at the stable before dawn every morning. Some of the happiest mornings of my life were spent in those quiet hours when the horses would hang their heads over the stall doors and whicker to be fed. I'd feed the horses, turn out the ones who need pasturing, and groom and care for my personal horses. Then I'd change into my school uniform, catch a bus to school, and spend my time in a virtual prison. When school let out, I returned to the stable until dark each night. I showed my horses, attended foalings, helped breed mares, did minor – and not so minor – vet work, and learned to budget money. By the time I was 15 I could suture a cut, trim hooves, help in a difficult foaling, and artificially inseminate a mare with frozen semen. A world-famous trainer told me that I could ride anything "with four legs and hair." Pretty empowering! I exercised a horse that later ran in the Kentucky Derby and was syndicated for more money than I'll make in this lifetime. It wasn't just that it was exciting to ride a horse of that quality; it was incredible to me that adults trusted me with an animal worth a few million dollars.

There were peripheral advantages to this lifestyle as well. I was more interested in horses than boys, for the most part. Abused teenage girls often attempt to find nurturing and acceptance in sexual relationships with other teens. I didn't have to. The other horsemen were quick with an affectionate hug or a positive comment. Because their opinion mattered so deeply to me, I never became involved with drugs or an untimely pregnancy. I learned responsibility. The horses had to be fed, no matter what. When the weather was inclement, I had to be there. I spent several nights at the sides of laboring mares. I spent two entire days hosing down the broken leg of a quarter horse mare so she could be transported to the horse hospital in Lexington, two hours away. She was able to be salvaged as a brood mare, rather than destroyed. Something out there needed me, and thought I was special.

A few months before my junior year of high school was to end, a teacher snapped at me for daydreaming. We were going over nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. We'd been going over them for weeks. I was bored out of my mind. She didn't acknowledge that I answered her correctly once she repeated the question. No, she was angry that I wasn't hanging on every word that fell from her lips. She embarrassed me, shouting that my head was always in the clouds. I looked at her with a great deal of betrayal and pain. I had liked her. She had no idea what my home life was like, that I hadn't eaten supper the night before or breakfast that morning, that one of my favorite mares was due to foal any moment and that I resented wasting my time in school. I stood up, gathered my things, and left class. I never went back.

Without having to waste my time in school, I was able to leave home at the tender age of 16. Summers were spent traveling and showing horses. Winters I worked in stables and at fast food restaurants. Sometimes I was hungry, and a few times I lived in tackrooms of stables. I never had much money, but I belonged to myself. It was a heady feeling. My little sister joined me when I was 18 and lived with me for a few years.

When I was 19 I was involved in a serious car accident that left me unable to ride for a year. I got my GED and began college. I loved college! I attended Northern Kentucky University, a small community college that had plenty of opportunities for forming mentoring relationships with professors. I was able to pursue several Independent Studies (like spending a summer indexing a book at Harvard, running an encounter group with a professor at the University of Cincinnati's medical school, and studying primates at the Cincinnati Zoo). I graduated five years later with a B.A. in Psychology and a B.S. in Applied Sociology and Anthropology. I was six

hours short of a degree in Biology, as well. I thrived when I was in an academic environment that challenged and supported me, although I was certainly never a mainstream student. The only area where I encountered difficulties was in advanced sciences. I took some remedial math classes to learn trig and geometry for physics. I graduated cum laude, and was named Outstanding Senior in Anthropology. My little sister, also a high school dropout, attended the same college-and was later named Outstanding Senior Woman.

While in the process of applying to medical school, I was again seriously injured when I was thrown off a horse-drawn carriage onto a concrete road. The forced two years of rehabilitation and the loss of the baby girl I was carrying at the time of the accident made me examine my life closely. My husband and I adopted a beautiful 17-month-old girl. From the moment she was in my arms I knew that I would not be going to medical school nor returning to work as a social worker at the urban runaway shelter I had worked at during college. I have been home full time ever since. I have continued to educate myself. I am happily home-schooling my daughter and providing family day care for five more little ones.

I feel my earlier experiences as a dropout gave me more flexibility in examining my life and swimming against the mainstream current. Deciding not to go to medical school after suffering through Organic Chemistry and Physics, which I found stultifying, was difficult. I struggled for a while with the feeling that I had let down others' expectations. But from the perspective of seven years, I now feel that I escaped by the skin of my teeth. Homeschooling my child, and homeschooling myself, are two of the most gratifying things I've ever done.

So, Jamie, don't think of yourself as a dropout. You chose at an early age to unschool yourself. Your needs obviously weren't being met in high school. Getting your GED will probably be good for your self-esteem. Mine meant more to me than my college degrees. As long as you are reading and actively exploring things that interest you, you are educating yourself. Your formal education is relatively unimportant. A diploma is just a piece of paper. It doesn't make you more or less of a person. I'm no better a person now that I've graduated from college than when I was a homeless teenager. You have everything you need to educate your child.

At home I was battered and demeaned – or at best ignored. At school, I was an outsider. My real life, where I was competent, nurtured, and accepted, took place far from my school and family.

[SS:] Kathryn Ridiman's beautiful letter inspires me to write something I've been thinking about for a while. Often when I speak about homeschooling to groups (and sometimes just in casual conversation), someone raises the question, "But what about kids with a difficult home life? Don't they need school as a haven?"

I would like to be able to show Kathryn's letter in answer. Of course kids who have a difficult home life need *some* kind of haven, some kind of place where they feel "competent, nurtured, accepted." Many of them never get this, but I would certainly wish it for them. I can believe that for some kids school *is* a haven, or at least a place that is preferable to being at home. I *can't* believe that schools see themselves primarily as havens, however. If you were designing a haven for troubled kids, a place where they were more likely to feel competent and accepted than they were at home, would you design it as schools are now designed, with tests, grades, very little chance to do real work, etc.? If we understand what Kathryn got out of working at the stable, we can see how few of the elements that were present there were present in school.

But again, even if schools *are* indeed havens for some kids, for many other kids they are another place to feel humiliated, unappreciated, stupid, incompetent, and cut off from their real concerns. The question that seems crucial to me is, how can we give kids access to many different kinds of places, besides either school or home, so that when home is miserable and school presents its own set of frustrations, there is an alternative?

The same people who say that schools are havens for troubled kids sometimes put the question specifically in terms of homeschooling. They ask, "Surely you're not saying that abusive or neglectful parents could be good homeschooling parents?" Well, no. I don't think anyone is saying that it would have been practical for Kathryn or others like her to think of doing homeschooling in the most basic sense of the word. If parents are abusive or neglectful, if home is not at all a welcoming or safe place to be, then of course many of the kinds of experiences that homeschoolers typically have wouldn't be part of the picture. But even if *homeschooling* as most people use the word isn't a workable option in cases like this, I can't accept that *being out of school* is equally unworkable. If we think in broader terms, terms that say, "What options does someone like this have? Where could she feel respected, nurtured, where could she participate in real work?" I think there may very well be options besides either school or home. Kathryn's story is a perfect illustration of this. Conventional wisdom says it's a shame that Kathryn became a high school dropout. A broader view, a view that takes the notion of homeschooling and expands it so that it means something like "being out of school in a positive way," says it's wonderful that Kathryn was able to find a place, and other people, to give her what school and home did not.

Schooling + Diplomas = Jobs?

Is it really true that more schooling will lead to a better job? Do people with school credentials perform more skillfully than people without them?

Pat Farenga writes:

The media have long pounded the drum about the need for schooling. But the statement that bothers me most is the one that keeps getting repeated year after year: the more schooling one has, the better prepared one is for a well-paying job. Fortunately there is a history of research on the connection between employment and education, and by examining it, even briefly, we can see that education's promoters are quite selective in what studies they publicize. Let me cast aside for now the issue of whether anyone can discern the future in such detail that they can know what specific skills and knowledge our 10-year-olds will need to know when they are 30. What I want to know is, does possession of school credentials, particularly diplomas, really mean people are better qualified for a job?

In 1971 various studies of the links between employment and school credentials, plus original research on the subject, were analyzed by Columbia University's Ivar Berg and published as *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery* (Beacon Press, 1971). It would be hard to summarize this book without going on for some time, so let me mention just a few highlights. One of Berg's studies examined the educational histories and job performance of air traffic controllers in the FAA. He notes that when he studied FAA performance evaluations, "College graduates were least likely to have received honors; the most awards were earned by non-college graduates without managerial training ... There is, in fact, more evidence to support the proposition that educational credentials as such have relatively little bearing on performance...".

In his concluding chapter Berg focuses on the educational establishment:

"Education ... is the most important non-defense activity in the public sector as a field of government employment. Its growth has been accompanied by a dramatic change in the academic achievements of teachers — so dramatic that today [1971] as many as three-fourths of all jobs defined as requiring college degrees are teaching jobs. Not all teachers have such academic achievements, of course, but the figures are impressive.

"Meanwhile, the number of teachers increased by almost 50 per cent from 1950 to 1960, a rate of increase much higher than that sustained by the work force, which grew about 15 per cent in the same decade. One can conclude, accordingly, that the mounting demand for education feeds in no small part upon itself."

Educators and politicians ignored Berg's analysis, especially his recommendation that government policies should allow for other ways, besides college, to enter professional careers. Ignorance may be bliss, but this is a very costly bliss, not only in dollars but in people's time spent in school when they could be pursuing more meaningful projects. For instance, a study entitled *Learning: In School and Out* by Dr. Lauren Resnick of the University of Pittsburgh in 1987 concluded that the vast majority of skills taught in school are not transferable to the real world. "Growing evidence ... points to the possibility that very little can be transported directly from school to out-of-school use," writes Dr. Resnick. The FAA, industry, and educators have all made it more difficult for non-credentialed people to get jobs despite evidence that alternatives to school credentials not only work, but are more cost-effective than additional years of schooling. People now need college degrees for jobs, such as being an air traffic controller, that until recently were done just as well by people without such credentials.

The connections between diplomas and jobs are much more tenuous than we are led to believe, and yet much of our national school debate keeps coming back to defining what and when children should learn in order for them to be prepared for what President Clinton described in one of his Satellite Town Meetings as the "high-skill, high-wage jobs of today." Does a twelve-year long checklist of skills really help us prepare people for work? Where, precisely, are these "high skill, high-wage jobs of today?"

There is much evidence from alternative schools as well as homeschooling that there is no need to create and enforce a check-list of skills in order to prepare children for the world of work. Homeschoolers who follow little or no set curriculum, and who often receive no official credentials, continue to get into the worlds of work and college without special difficulty; we've been printing such stories for seventeen years now. The Sudbury Valley School, which has no set curriculum or grading system, has published the results of a study of its graduates and finds them all doing well either in college or in work (*Legacy Of Trust: Life After The Sudbury Valley School Experience*, Sudbury Valley Press, 1992). *The Eight Year Study*, commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation in the late 1930s, proved that learner-directed, experimental schools using a wide array of alternative methods of learning prepared their students for college as well as, and in some cases better than, traditional high schools and prep schools. Non-traditional colleges, such as Marlboro, Bennington, and Goddard, had been in existence well before the 1960s popularized them. They have no grades and no preset courses of study, yet their graduates find work and take their place in society. Finally, we all know examples, and many teachers know this too, of children who couldn't do well in school, but who excelled outside of school. James Herndon, for example, wrote in *How To Survive In Your Native Land* about a

student who couldn't solve simple math problems on a blackboard but who could keep score for large bowling tournaments. Yet professional educators choose to ignore such examples and insist, as the American Federation of Teachers has for years, that performance in school should be linked to eligibility for work, so if you fail math in high school, you can't become a carpenter as an adult, and so on. Despite the contrary evidence I've mentioned, and there is more, we are faced with national policies that insist that the best way for the equation of schooling + diplomas = jobs to be solved is for others to dictate what we should know and to sort out the winners and the losers as defined by the educational standards.

If only the real world would co-operate with this linear equation! But the real world is non-linear and it changes much faster than the world of school ever can. For instance, John Gatto has pointed out that most adults who now use computers have pretty much taught themselves how to use them at home, at work, and in banking, without formal schooling. Some of us may take a course on our own initiative to learn more about how to use computers, but this is not the same as having school and business officials decide that we *must* take a course in order to use our computers better. Nonetheless, we often hear that we need schools to "teach children how to use computers," as if this is the one and only time they will get to learn such skills and as if using computers is an incredibly complicated, specialized process that can only be taught to the young in classrooms.

So the drums beat on for more and more schooling for more and more jobs. "Without an educated workforce we can't grow this economy or remain competitive," the President told a Satellite Town Meeting audience. Of course, education is meant to be synonymous with schooling in such statements, and this isn't a perspective that is unique to President Clinton. This whole national goals and standards business started with the Bush administration, which proves that pedagogical hubris – defined by Ivan Illich as human beings doing what God cannot, "namely, manipulate others for their own salvation" – knows no political boundaries.

The most disturbing thing about the schooling + diplomas = jobs equation is the assumption that these "high skill, high wage jobs of today" really do exist in abundance. Certainly some new fields, such as biotechnology, might require specialized skills and knowledge, though I strongly doubt that school is the only place where people can learn these things. But we must remember that there will be, as there always is, a limited number of openings for these jobs. Like architects, English majors, and engineers in the '70s, our children may spend time and money getting diplomas for school-defined jobs, only to find that the market is glutted with graduates like themselves. In 1971 Berg warned of the social problems that will be created as more and more "unemployed college men" must face the music.

Since there is no actual connection between diplomas and job competence, it is plain discrimination to fail to hire people due to their lack of schooling.

That was 1971. What about today? In the *New York Daily News* (11/30/91) a story with this headline ran in the Business section: "Schooling is Out. '90s Job Forecast is for Less Education." I quote from that article: "'More than three-quarters of all jobs in New York State during the 1990s will require a high school education – or less – with most of the growth in the service sector,' Samuel Ehrenhalt, regional commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, said yesterday." Following this up, I went directly to the U.S. Department of Labor's own statistics (*Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, Spring 1992) and found that the service sector "is projected to add the largest number of jobs of any occupational group by 2005." The jobs highlighted for fastest growth in the service sector are correction officials, firefighters, guards, police, detectives and special agents, chefs, cooks, kitchen workers and "food and beverage service workers," salespersons, clerks, cashiers, receptionists and secretaries, nursing and home health aides, childcare workers, janitors, groundskeepers.

Add to this mix the fact that employment prospects for American youth are the worst in years, and one wonders where all these "high skill, high wage" jobs are. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "While the nation's official unemployment rate is a nagging 7%, it is three times worse among 16-19 year olds. For young people ages 20-24, the rate is 50% higher than the national average."

Where you study appears to matter less than *what* you study. Economists Thomas Kane and Cecilia Rouse say that those graduating with a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution or an associate's degree from a community college do not earn significantly more than those with similar numbers of college credits but no degree. In other words, it is course work, rather than the credentials, which count in subsequent earnings. For homeschoolers, this means that it will in many cases be more important to document what you have done than to worry about getting a diploma. Further, since there is no actual connection between diplomas and job competence, it is plain discrimination to fail to hire people due to their lack of schooling.

As the job and schooling markets keep growing apart, as more unemployed or underemployed college graduates enter the workforce, homeschoolers are showing that completing years of schooling is not the only way to learn or, ultimately, the way to get a good job, and that the jobs school prepares students for may not be worth the social and personal costs.

Resources & Recommendations

Wizard of Oz Club

Phoebe Wells (MA) writes:

Eoin (6) just joined the International Wizard of Oz Club (c/o Fred Meyer, 220 N 11th St, Escanaba MI 49829). They have a newsletter called *The Baum Bugle*, and there's also a newsletter by and for kids. Most important for Eoin, they are a source of Oz books that come later in the series. Only Volumes #1-14 are easy to find ordinarily, but the Club has volumes way beyond that, and lots of other good stuff – maps, games, etc. They even have a magazine that publishes amateur new Oz stories that people contribute.

Oceanwatch Challenge

More from Phoebe Wells:

We also found out about a program that Eoin can hardly wait to begin: the BOC Student Oceanwatch Challenge. The program lets kids follow the progress of sailors and yacht racers around the world. They'll get information (including photos) about the skippers, the boats, and the races, and regular bulletins detailing the progress of the boats. Kids can also learn about efforts to protect the world's oceans and their wildlife and even get materials to use in cleaning up their local waterfront.

We read an article about this program in *Odyssey* magazine which said that classrooms can join, so we worked up our homeschool letterhead and wrote, hoping to convince them that we are just as worthy as a school. We promptly received a lovely, warm letter from the director saying she'd just love to have us aboard, the curriculum is so flexible that it would be great for homeschoolers, etc. So I sent in our registration card, and by return mail came a fat envelope full of brochures and another very nice letter. The tables are turned now - the director was asking me to help publicize the program to homeschooling groups. Interested people can write BOC Oceanwatch Student Ocean Challenge, PO Box 631, Jamestown RI 02835; 401-423-3535.

Real World Math

[SS:] *Real World Math* by Sam Christy is a collection of thought-provoking statistical questions about almost everything you can imagine - geography, astronomy, education, families, law, and much more. What the questions have in common is that they all involve statistics, but what makes this book unlike a typical math workbook is that these questions are not ends in themselves. It is easy to see how they can lead to all sorts of interesting discussions. For example, under "Education" there are questions about world literacy, dropouts, college education by gender, and lots of other things. In other sections there are questions about heights of mountains, about incomes of male and female executives, about arrests for different types of crimes, about voting patterns in different parts of the country, about TV usage. You don't have to think of yourself as someone interested in math to find this book interesting.

The book especially appeals to me because the questions are open-ended. Yes, the answers are provided at the back, and eventually you will probably want to turn to them. But the speculation and discussion are likely to be half the fun, so I wouldn't suggest turning to the answers too quickly. Of course, I can also imagine that after you see the answers, there will be much more to discuss: *why* is that the answer? What does it *mean* that there are that many, that much more, or whatever it is? The questions show us how numbers help us think about and understand the world, which is of course the approach many homeschoolers will enjoy.

Copies of *Real World Math* are $14.95 from 26 Upland Rd, Cambridge MA 02140. Ask for the teacher's copies, because those are the ones with the answers.

Newsletters by Teens

Josh White, 10201 Adams Rd, Galena OH 43021, who published a newsletter for baseball enthusiasts (see GWS #91), now announces two new newsletters. He writes,

"The idea is for one of the newsletters to focus primarily on Christian writing while the other will publish just any good writing. The Christian newsletter will deal with current events, inspirational writing, and anything else from a Christ-like perspective. The other newsletter will focus on good high school and college level writing. It will be insightful as well as enjoyable to read. Send in your manuscripts in any legible format - typed, printed, handwritten, etc. The newsletters will be free to all those who send me the postage to mail them. I also plan to distribute the newsletters in libraries."

Homeschooling teenagers Zoë Blowen-Ledoux and Elizabeth Farsaci have begun publishing a newsletter called *Self-Schooler's Network News*. They describe the newsletter as "for the most part ... a literary newsletter; we print poems, book reviews, short stories, etc. It does have a peaceful/liberal attitude and we also print articles on other topics submitted and suggested by our readers loosely associated with topics of that bias." The first issue has poetry, fiction, a story about a homeschool French class's trip, and Zoe's account of what it was like for two young people to open a bank account. $3 for 4 issues and $6 for 8 issues from RR 1 Box 452, Lisbon Falls ME 04252.

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our complete 1994 Directory of Families was published in GWS #96. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory (check here *and* in #96). We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

AZ — Don & Sue LOSCHEIDER (Nolan/85, Colin/88, Courtney/90) 842 Saddlehorn Rd, Sedona 86351 ••• Uintah SHABAZZ & Dillon DOWNEY (Sante/75, Sonnet/77, Lexy/88) PO Box 668, Springerville 85938 **(H)**

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Tom & Nicole BLEES (Melina/84, Shanti/86) PO Box 189, Comptche 95427 **(H)** ••• Mike & Linda Conrad JANSEN (Kristina/82, Derek/83, Monika/86, Dominic/89) 25031 Hwy 44, Millville 96062 **(H)** ••• Mary & Jeff LANCTOT (Peter/87, Daniel/89, Nina/92) 1502 Yarberry Dr, Petaluma 94954 ••• Annie & Mark LEMIEUX (Tyson/86, Jessie/87, Ian/92) 8737 Whitehouse Rd, Elk Grove 95758 ••• Tane TACHYON & Jon SHEMITZ (Sam/88) 1805A Felt St, Santa Cruz 95062

CA, South (zips to 94000) — Tracie GIB & John BURGE (David/90) 1030 Kentfield Dr, Salinas 93901-1064

IL — Brett & Laura BRUNER (Zach/90) 712 LaSalle St, Ottawa 61350 ••• Vicki HARDER & Mark THORNE (Evan/87, Griffin/93) 740 Maple Ln, Hoffman Estates 60194

MD — Esther GEIGER & Joel SNYDER (Emerie/83) 8401 Barron St, Takoma Park 20912 ••• Nancy & Bill GREER (Glen/88, Lane/92) 1688 Belhaven Woods Ct, Pasadena 21122-3727 (change) **(H)**

MA — Robert & Mary Pat CREVATAS (Samuel/88, Ethan/90, Justine/91) 7 Myrtle St, Beverly 01915-3315 ••• Kim KAUFMAN & Bruce McCARTER (Noah/90) 1514 Beacon St #48, Brookline 02146 ••• Melanie SNOW (Devra/88) 16 Brown St, Waltham 02154 ••• Brian & Cherylee DUNCAN (Tyler/83, Cally/85) 5555 Western, Brookline 65619 (change)

MO — Cynthia & William SCOTT (Vanessa/80) 635 E 45 St, Kansas City 64110

NH — Doris & Paul HOHENSEE (Michael/80, Erin/81, Kira/83, Douglas/86, Gregory/88, Dianna/92) 15 Swart Terr, Nashua 03060 (change) ••• Elizabeth LONGFELLOW & Gary ANDERSON (Haley/80) 124 Great Bay Rd, Greenland 03840

NJ — Ivy GREENSTEIN & Christopher DOOLITTLE (Colin/85) 178 Hardenburgh Av, Demarest 07627

NM — Edward & Julie ALLEYNE (Thema/83, Tsering/85, Amaranth/89) PO Box 129, Pinon 88344-0129 (change) **(H)**

NY — Ward & Alice COTTAR (Jeroen/84, Sanne/85, Michiel/87, Kasper/88, Jolijn/90) 7 Davis Av, PO Box 623, Hammondport 14840 ••• Kim KIMBLE & Tom McENTEE (Bryce/82, Minty/84, Noelle/91) 94 Plains Rd, New Paltz 12561 (change) **(H)** ••• Victoria & Jeff PERRY (Vera/90, Alison/91) RR 1 Box 15, Buskirk 12028 ••• Bruce & Pat WHIPPLE (Brian/82, Kimberly/93) 26 Valley Rd, Wappinger Falls 12590

OH — Carol & Dan NARIGON (Brandon/84, Sophie/91) 2913 Stauffer Dr, Beavercreek 45434

OR — Linda ZIEDRICH & Robert WATERHOUSE (Benjamin/84, Rebecca/88, Samuel/91) 7175 SE Wallace Rd, Dayton 97114 **(H)**

PA — Kevin & Janet RHODES (Darcy/86, Hilary/88, Gillian/90) 1920 Tuscarawas Rd, Beaver 15009 (change) **(H)**

TX — Dan & Linda FLAKE (Shelly/84) 2405 Fieldstone Dr, Killeen 76542

VT — Cynthia HUARD & Larry HAMBERLIN (David/88, Sarabeth/91) PO Box 68 Rt 100, Rochester 05767 **(H)**

VA — Ron & Terry DELONEY (John/80, Jason/83) 353 Quarters, Quantico 22134 (change) ••• Kyle SHUMATE (Ryan/76, Ashleigh/80, Kelsey/83) 11896 County Line Rd NE, Copper Hill 24079 **(H)**

WA — John & Pamela RANDALL (Sara/81, Rachel/83, Ian/87) 30 Eiler Ln, Zillah 98953 **(H)**

WI — Mary & Marv BLOEDOW (Jason/84) N2723 Cty Hwy W, Weyerhauser 54895 (change) **(H)** ••• Susan ELIAS & Tom McCONNELL (April/81, Mark/84) 3145 N 54 St, Milwaukee 53216 **(H)**

Canada:

Que — Ben & Helene WALKER (Jean-Luc/89, Marie-Helene/92) PO Box 1018, Mistassini G0W 2C0 **(H)**

Other Locations — Mario & Beaulah TAGUIWALO (Mark/74, Freddie/78, Mike/84) 21 Everlasting Rd, Pilar Village Las Piñas 1750 MM, Philippines

Delete from Directory of Organizations:

Helpful Private School — EUREKA! Learning Community, Inc

Groups to Add:

ID — Homelearning Support Network, 4120 Wisteria Way, Boise 83704, 208-376-7066

General — Nat'l Assoc of Catholic Home Educators, PO Box 420225, San Diego CA 92142

Address Changes:

CO — Northern CO Home School Assoc, c/o Tremback, 2200 Vassar Av, Fort Collins 80525, 303-221-9749

ME — Southern Maine Home Education Support Network, 76 Beech Ridge Rd, Scarborough 04074, 207-883-9621

Once a year we print our complete lists of helpful teachers, lawyers, professors, psychologists, school districts, and resource people. As with our Directory of Families, we print additions and changes to these lists throughout the year, so please continue to send them in. If you're sending us a change of address for a subscription, please let us know if you're on one of these lists so we can change it here, too. We're always interested to know whether people appreciate having this information available, so do let us know whether these lists are being used.

Listings begin on the next page.

ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1994 Directory (GWS #96) Yes ___ No ___

Or in the additions in this issue? Yes ___ No ___

Certified Teachers

AZ - Kathleen M. KNEZ, Western Navajo Reservation, PO Box 889, Tuba City 86045; Special Ed

CA, South (zips to 94000) - Tutu ANDERSON, 6949 Fisk Av, San Diego 92122; 619-453-1086 ••• Karen BISHOP, N County Pl, 2204 El Camino Real, Suite 312, Oceanside 92054 ••• John BOSTON, PO Box 92, Escondido 92033; 619-749-1522 ••• Ruth BOTHNE, 17355 Melody Ln, Los Gatos 95030; 408-353-3620 ••• Michelle BUSH, 2374 Stonyvale Rd, Tujunga 91042; 818-352-0315 ••• Sandy DOERFEL, PO Box 301331, Escondido 92030 ••• Herb HAMMER, PO Box 45918, Los Angeles 90045; 213-281-6025 ••• Sarah LESLIE, 1846 N Edgemont #6, Los Angeles 90027; 213-662-5571

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) - Margaret ARIGHI, 6015 Mauritania Av, Oakland 94605; 415-653-5098 ••• Karen CANTO, 21023 Lynn Ln, Sonora 95370 ••• Marilyn DeVORE, 4273 Forbestown Rd, Oroville 95966 ••• Carol CRESTETTO, 29 Taft Ct, Novato 94947 ••• Jasmin GERER, 414 Emeline Av, Santa Cruz 95060; 408-423-8311 ••• Roy SHIMP, 2164 E Bellevue Rd, Merced 95340 ••• Cheryl STEVENS, 2486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette 94549 (K-12, special ed) ••• Scott YOUNG, Charlotte's Web, 1207-F Bridgeway, Sausalito CA 94965; 415-332-2244

CO - Kara BERTHOLF, #1 Rd 6565 NBU4, Kirtland 87417 (certified in CO & NM) ••• Sandra GUENTHER, 2923 Sunset Dr, Golden 80401; English, Spanish, French

CT - Geoffrey SMITH, 365 Bellevue Rd, New Haven 06511; 203-787-5659; Eng, math, 7-12, admin

FL - Charlotte THIEN, 12201 Old Kings Rd, Jacksonville 32219; 904-768-0472 ••• Roger TRUNK, Rt 1 Box 110, Satsuma 32189; 904-649-4479

HI - Debbie KUKAHIKO, FAMILY ACADEMY, 72-3960 Hawaii Belt Rd, Kailua-Kona 96740

IL - Suzanne BALDWIN, 1452 Andover Dr, Aurora 60504; 708-851-0538 (K-12 music)

IA - Richard & Sharon CARGIN, 25 6th Av NE, LeMars 51031 ••• Rita EBELING, 324 Crescent Ln, Ft Madison 52627

IN - Marie DUSING, FAMILY ACADEMY, Rt 1 Box 509, Poland 47868; 812-986-2884

ME - Kathi KEARNEY, Box 69, New Sharon 04955; ME & VT K-12 ••• LouAnna PERKINS, Rt 1 Box 22-C, Penobscot 04476; 207-326-8609 (K-8)

MD - Frances MOYER, 4017 William Ln, Bowie 20715

MA - Maureen & Michael CAREY, 3 Fayette Park, Cambridge 02139 ••• George FOURNIER, RFD 2 Box 101, Brimfield 01010 (French) ••• Adele GARLICK, 96 Coolidge Cir, Northborough 01532 ••• George HECHT, 4 High Ledge Av, Wellesley 02181; 617-235-4246 ••• Thomas MAHER, 30 Park St, Wakefield 01880; 617-245-7634 ••• Faith Jones OZAN, 9 Tilehurst Ln, Marblehead 01945 ••• Mario PAGNONI, 76 Emsley Ter, Methuen 01844 ••• Linda ZUERN, Box 619, 5 Depot Rd, Cataumet MA 02534

MI - Kathy DONAHUE, Box 80-B S Superior Rd, Atlantic Mine 49905; K-12 ••• Bonnie MIESEL, 1111 Cricklewood SW, Wyoming 49509 ••• Dinah MORRISON, 76 Latta St, Battle Creek 49015; 7-12 ••• Muriel PALKO, 321 N William, Ludington 49431; K-12

MN - Jeanne BOURQUIN, 1568 McMaham Blvd, Ely 55731 ••• Linda WINSOR, 1927 James Ave, St Paul 55105

NH - Sally EMBER, 284 Water St, Keene 03431 (multicultural education)

NJ - Sandy MADKIFF, MINOTOLA ACTIVITY CTR, 207 Coan Av, Minotola 08341; 609-697-1643; K-12 Eng

NM - Kara BERTHOLF, #1 Rd 6565 NBU4, Kirtland 87417 (certified in CO & NM)

NY - Lyman BARRY, 9297 Shaw Rd, Nunda 14517; 716-468-2650; science ••• Diane CHODAN, RD 1 Box 462, Rome 13440 ••• Cheryl COONEY, 225 Rector Pl, 9R, NY NY 10280 (NY, NJ, MA) ••• Lucretia GABRIEL, 12 Fairway Ct, Albany 12208; science ••• John Taylor GATTO, 235 W 76 St, New York NY 10023 ••• Joyce HOUCK, RR 1 Box 148A, Brant Lake 12815; 518-494-2072; elem ••• Kathi KEARNEY, 1230 Amsterdam Av #604, New York 10027 ••• Martin MILLER, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen 14891; math, sci, accounting ••• Jo MOBERLY, 149 S Main St, Naples 14512 ••• Natalie TATZ, 3320 Bainbridge Av, Bronx NY 10467; 212-654-7918 (elem)

OH - Linda CAMPBELL, 1862 Merganser Run Dr, Columbus 43215 ••• Elizabeth LOWER, 5022 Wabash Dr, Fairfield 45014; 513-863-2891 (Montessori) ••• Louann Rebbin-Shaw, 4412 Osborn Rd, Medway 45341; 513-873-8124

OR - Ann LAHRSON, 9025 SW 50th, Portland 97219; 503-244-9677 ••• Marilyn LOWE, 503-362-1203 (Spanish K-12, English 7-12) ••• Mary MAYFIELD, 24874 W Brush Creek Rd, Sweet Home 97386; 503-367-2474; 5-12 ••• Marcia SPANI, ALOHA KIDS ACADEMY, 4640 SW 182, Aloha 97007; 503-642-4094; K-8

PA - Diana BASEMAN, RD 3 Box 256 B, Tarentum 15084 ••• Debby BELL, 6 Royal Rd, Palmyra 17078; language ••• Kathy HOLLEGER, 3106 Swede Rd, Norristown 19401 ••• Rick KEPHART, 1 High St, Malvern 19355 (elem)

TX - Linda JONES, 3301 Hemlock, Temple 76504; elem

VA - Scott CHRISTIAN, Rt 5 Box 358, Martinsville 24112; 703-632-3780 ••• Mary FREED, 1825 W Grace St, Richmond VA 23220 (Montessori) ••• Suzanne STALLINGS, 301 Macon St, Lynchburg 24501-3221; 804-528-4585

WA - FAMILY ACADEMY (teachers all over WA state), 146 SW 153 Box 290, Seattle 98166; 206-246-9227 ••• Karen FOGLE, 14241 NE Wdnvl Duvall #243, Woodinville 98072; 206-481-2228 ••• Julie & David LOYD, Waldron 98297; (Julie: elem, Spanish, math; David: elem, high school, English, Spanish, Social Studies) ••• Tara SENNETT, 15506 19th Av, Tacoma 33445 ••• Denis WICHAR, Cascade Jr High School, 13900 NE 18th St, Vancouver 98684-7299; 256-6052

WI - Cheryl & Bruce BISHOP, 5148 Bluff Ct, Sturgeon Bay 54235; elem ••• Alison McKEE, 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison 53705; elem, vis. impair

CANADA - Leslie AYRE-JASCHKE, 10409-101 St, Peace River AB T8S 1K7

ELSEWHERE - James A. PETRAIT, St Joseph High School, Plot 3, Rt 2, Frederiksted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands 00840; school 809-772-0455, home 809-778-5761

Lawyers

CT - Frank Cochran, 51 Elm St, PO Box 1898, New Haven 06508-1898; 203-865-7380

DC - Nancy LeSourd & George Grange II, 1925 K St NW, Suite 300, Washington 20006-1115; 202-862-2000

FL - Charles Baron, 167th and NE 6th, NO. 815, N. Miami Beach 33160; 305-770-1410 ••• James R. Wells, 3837 Quail Ridge Dr, Boynton Beach 33436; 407-734-5068

HI - Tom DiGrazia, DiGrazia Law Office, PO Box 1780, Kailua 96734

ID - Lyle Eliasen, 202 Idaho St, American Falls 83211; 208-226-5138

IA - Craig Hastings, 315 6th St, Ames 50010; 515-232-2501

KS - Austin Kent Vincent, 2222 Pennsylvania Av, Topeka 66605; 913-234-0022

MD - Ray Fidler, 805 Tred Avon Rd, Baltimore 21212; 410-296-6495 ••• Paul Kimberger, 3905 Bexley Pl, Marlow Hghts 20746; 301-899-6933 ••• Dale R. Reid, 7091 Brangles Rd, Marriottsville 21104; 301-549-1322

MA - Eugene Burkart, 267 Moody St, Waltham 02154; 617-899-5337 ••• Susan Ostberg, 41 Warren Av, Harvard 01451; 508-456-8515 ••• John Sandelli, 112 Sladen St, Dracut 01826; 508-957-5528

MI - Norm Perry, 8976 US 31-33, PO Box 241, Berrien Spgs 49103; 616-471-2848

NY - David Pullen, 48 W Main St, Fillmore 14735; 716-567-2229 ••• Seth Rockmuller, 9 Kinderhook St, Chatham 12037; 518-392-4277

OH - David A. Haffey, 3055 Rodenbeck Dr, Dayton 45432-2662 ••• James Peters, 107 W. Court St, Woodsfield 43793; 614-472-1681

OR - Kim Gordon, Oregon Yacht Club, #27, Portland 97202; 503-238-1069

PA - Mark Semisch, 56 Warden Rd, Doylestown 18901

WI - Jack Umpleby, N96W18221 County Line Rd, Menomeonee Falls 53051-1300

WY - Gerald Mason, PO Box 785, Pinedale 82941; 307-367-2134 ••• William H. Twichell, PO Box 1219, Pinedale 82941; 307-367-2414

Professors

The following people are willing to help homeschooling families in developing curriculum, evaluating progress, or in other ways.

Larry Arnoldsen, Box 10 McKay Bldg, Brigham Young U, Provo UT 84602

Graham Ashworth, 423 Fox Chapel Rd, Pittsburgh PA 15238; 412-963-8800

Prof. Robert A. Carlson, College of Ed, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada S7N OWO

Sandy Doerfel, PO Box 301331, Escondido CA 92030

Robert E. Kay, MD, PO Box C, Paoli PA 19301; 215-359-7885

J. Gary Knowles, Program in Educational Studies, School of Ed, U of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI 48109-1259

Michael Masny, 43 Burncoat St, Leicester MA 01524; 617-892-8012; certified school psychologist & social worker

Martin Miller, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen NY 14891

Michael J. Murphy, Assoc. Prof., U. of Saskatchewan, College of Education, Saskatoon, Sask., Canada S7N 0W0

Dr. Robert Newman, Assoc Prof Emeritus, Teacher Education, Syracuse U, 137 Hughes Pl, Syracuse NY 13210

Sam B. Peavey, Ed.D., 2307 Tyler Ln, Louisville KY 40205; 502-459-2058

Edward Pino, 189 Antelope Tr, Parker CO 80134

Richard Prystowsky, Professor of English and Humanities, Irvine Valley College, 5500 Irvine Ctr Dr, Irvine CA 92720

Brian D. Ray, National Home Education Research Institute, Western Baptist College, 5000 Deer Park Dr SE, Salem OR 97301-9392

Jack Robertson, 532 Laguardia Pl #398, New York NY 10012-1428

Gary L. Stevens, University of San Francisco, 2486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette CA 94549

Chester S. Williams, ETSU, Box 5518, Texarkana TX 75501; 214-838-5458

Psychologists

CA - Michelle Bush, 2374 Stonyvale Rd, Tujunga 91042; 818-352-0315 ••• Mary Ann Hutchison, 29 Navy St, Penthouse, Venice 90291; 310-281-7711 ••• Hal Jindich, 555 W Middlefield, S-301, Mtn View 94043; 415-969-9981

MA - Michael Masny, 43 Burncoat St, Leicester 01524; 617-892-8012 (certified school psychologist and social worker) ••• Dr. Susan Ott, HC 81, Box 10A, Petersham 01366; 508-724-8892 ••• Paul Shafiroff, Ed.D., Director of Guidance, Southern Berkshire

Regional School District, Sheffield 01257 ••• Dr. Paul Daniel Shea, 1450 Beacon St. Suite 801, Brookline 02146, 617-277-42149

NC - Linda Brannon Shamblin & William Shamblin, 219 Wildflower Rd, Asheville 28804, 704-253-6797

OH - Richard George, 1201 30th St NW, Canton 44709

PA - Dr. Bob Conroy, 1724 Smoky Corners Rd, Williamsport 17701

TX - Steven Gutstein, PhD, 4550 Post Oak Pl, Suite #342, Houston 77027, 713-621-7496

WA - Holy Family Institute, 43 Frontier Rd, Appleton WA 98602 (counselors)

Canada - Jan Hunt, RR1 G4 Box 10, Winlaw, BC V0G 2J0, 604-355-2325

School Districts

The following is a list of school districts that are willingly and happily cooperating with homeschoolers, and who are willing to be listed in GWS as doing so. There are many more cooperative districts around the country than there are districts on this list, and we have printed several stories in back issues of GWS about cooperation between schools and homeschoolers. If you are interested in seeing this material, place an order and ask us to send you back issues with material on this topic. Back issues are $2 each plus $2 per order for subscribers, $4.50 each for nonsubscribers.

Do bear in mind that not all states require homeschooling families to work with local school districts; in fact, many do not. Nonetheless, a cooperative school district may give homeschooling families access to events or materials even if they are not legally required to approve of or evaluate those families.

We only list school districts under the following conditions: (1) The family has to be not just satisfied but pleased with the cooperation the schools are giving to their homeschooling efforts. (2) The schools themselves have to be happy about being included in the list. If your district is cooperating with your homeschooling, and you would like them to be on this list, ask them, and let us know if they say to go ahead.

CA - Butte County Office of Education, 2120 B Robinson, Oroville CA 95965, James H. Scott, Principal, Home School Program

Lodi Unified School District, 835 W Lockford St, Lodi 95240; 209-369-7411; Don Shalvey, Asst. Supt. - Instruction K-12

Loma Prieta School District, 23800 Summit Rd, Los Gatos 95030; 408-353-2389; Dr. Kenneth Simpkins, Superintendent; Dr. Ruth Bothne, Independent Home Study Program Director

Marysville Joint Unified, 1919 B St, Marysville 95901

Monterey County Office of Education, 901 Blanco Circle, PO Box 80851, Salinas 93912; Bill LaPlante, Director of Alternative Programs

Mt Shasta Union School District, 601 E Alma St, Mt Shasta 96067; 916-926-3846; Carolyn Briody, Home School Coordinator

Santa Cruz City Schools, Alternative Family Education, 536 Palm St, Santa Cruz 95060; 408-429-3806; Attn: Terry Jones

IL - Madison Junior High, Southern River Oak Dr, Naperville 60565; Mr. Vergo, Principal.

Naperville Central High School, 44 W Aurora Av, Naperville 60540; Mr. Paulsen, Principal.

(note: these are individual schools, not school districts.)

MA - Cambridge Public Schools, 159 Thorndike St, Cambridge 02141; 617-498-9233. Contact Mr. Fran Foley.

Chatham Public Schools, Chatham MA 02633, Supt. Vida R. Gavin

Lowell School District, 89 Appleton, Lowell 01852; 454-5431; James McMahon, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum Development

Rockland Public Schools, Rockland 02370; Supt. Ronald P. Gerhart

Southern Berkshire Regional School District, Sheffield 01257; Director of Guidance, Paul Shafiroff, Thomas A. Consolati, Supt.

PA - Radnor Township School District, Administration Building, 135 S. Wayne Av, Wayne 19087; Dr. John A. DeFlaminis, Supt.

Resource People

The people listed below have experience with the following subjects and are willing to correspond with others who are interested. In many cases these subjects have been discussed in back issues of GWS, so if you are seeking information you can ask us to select the relevant issues for you. (Back issues are $2 each plus $2 per order for subscribers; $4.50 for nonsubscribers).

Adoption: Maureen Carey, 3 Fayette Park, Cambridge MA 02139 (adoptive nursing, transracial adoption) ••• Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Tara Tieso-Battis & Pat Battis, 1786 Rome Av, St Paul MN 55116-2424 (adoptive nursing, transracial adoption) ••• Reed & Chris Sims, 414 W Soledad Av #602, Agana, Guam 96910 ••• Jenny Wright, Quaker City, H.C. 60, Box 50, Charlestown NH 03603, 603-543-0910

Autism: Jill Whelan, 1714 E 51st St, Indianapolis IN 46205

Blindness: Donald & Kathy Klemp (son:75) N6479 Kroghville Rd, Waterloo WI 53594 ••• Ruth Matilsky, 109 S 4th Av, Highland Park NJ 08904 ••• Alison McKee, 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison WI 53705

Computers: Jack Loranger, MPO 17-R Krogstad Rd, Washougal WA 98671; 206-837-3760; "Electronic Educator" BBS #837-3299 ••• Mario Pagnoni, 76 Emsley Terr, Methuen MA 01844

Custody Disputes: Debbie Driscoll, 14503 SE 114th Pl, Renton WA 98059 (also single parents & gay & lesbian families) ••• Char Love, PO Box 2035, Guerneville CA 95446-2035. (We maintain a list of others with experience in this area who prefer not to list themselves publicly, and we will forward stamped letters to these people if asked.)

Down Syndrome: Elaine Bechtold, 10827 Rosedale Av N, Rt 1 Box 233, Loretto MN 55357-9793, 612-498-7553 ••• Rosemary Firstenberg, PO Box 25266, Seattle WA 98125 ••• Heidi Jarvis, N8373 Center Rd, Gleason WI 54435, 715-873-4050

Ham Radio: Sheryl Schuff, 8156 Lieber Rd, Indianapolis IN 46260, 317-259-4778

Learning Disabilities: ••• Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Rosemary Firstenberg, PO Box 25266, Seattle WA 98125 ••• Leslie McColgin, RR 1 Box 146, Cunningham KY 42035 (speech & language pathologist) ••• Laverne Reynolds, 505 Oleander Dr, Palatha FL 32177-6435 ••• Cheryl & Gary Stevens, 2486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette CA 94549 (Special Ed., Chemical Sensitivity)

Montessori: Gloria Harrison, PSC 83 Box R, APO AE 09726 ••• Elizabeth Lowen, 5928 Morningside Dr, Fairfield OH 45015

Physical Handicaps: Janna Books, Box 309-B, Route 2, Santa Fe NM 87505 ••• Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Karen Franklin, 3939 Winfield Rd, Boynton Bch FL 33436 (Jessica:80 C.P.) ••• Martin Miller, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen NY 14891 ••• Laverne Reynolds, Rt 1 Box 766C, Pomona Park FL 32181-9715 ••• Saunny Scott, 1901 Barker St, Lawrence KS 66044

Single Parents: Debbie Driscoll (see Custody Disputes, above) ••• Janet Hoffman, PO Box 288, Hamburg PA 19526-0288 ••• Diane McNeil, 3131 Cty EE, Baileys Harbor WI 54202 ••• Laura Pritchard, 24860 128th Place SE, Kent WA 98031 ••• Lisa Spector, 203-677-2852 ••• Karen Turner, PO Box 622, Redway CA 95560-0622 ••• SPECIAL, Single Parents Educating Children in Alternative Learning, c/o Amy K. Vanorio, 2 Pineview Dr #5, Amelia OH 45102 ••• Christine Willard, 2090 Pine Ave, Los Osos CA 93402

Traveling Families: Lois & Jim Blumenthal, 1132 Beechwood Dr, Hagerstown MD 21742-3007 ••• Louis & Jennifer Gordon (Katie:81, Patty:84) 10355 Grand Av, Bloomington MN 55420-5228 ••• Arlene Haight (Becky:68, Matt:73) 4150 So US #1, RD 2, Palm Bay FL 32905

Twins: Gloria Harrison, PSC 83 Box R, APO AE 09726

Grown-Up Homeschoolers

These former homeschoolers are now living away from home and are either at college or involved in work, apprenticeships, or travel. The name of the college the student attends is usually evident from the address; if not, we have included it in parentheses. For those not in college, we have included a very brief description of what they are doing or have done. Where applicable, we have also listed the number of the GWS issue in which a more complete description of the person's experience was published. (Note: some former homeschoolers asked that their parents' address be used even though they are living elsewhere; in such cases, parents will forward the mail.)

Alazel Acheson, 2121 S Alaska, Tacoma WA 98405; 206-272-8124 (U. of Puget Sound; computer research and development)

Eleadari Acheson, 6575 S Simmons Dr, Clinton WA 98236; 206-341-7330 (teaching gymnastics; GWS #76)

Tia Acheson, 6575 S Simmons Dr, Clinton WA 98236; 206-341-7330 (School of Visual Concepts, Seattle)

Elye Alexander, 617-493-2118 (Harvard Univ; GWS #75; would prefer phone calls to letters, but parents' address, for contacts after 6/94, is RR 1 Box 795, Craftsbury Common VT 05827)

Ben Barker, 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (runs canoeing & mountaineering expeditions in MI and MT; attended Nat'l Outdoor Leadership School & Outward Bound; GWS #86, #93)

Britt Barker Mariner, 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (runs Suzuki piano studios in WY and CO; writer, private pilot; GWS #56, #60, #93)

Dan Barker, 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (cellist with Missoula Symphony Orchestra; outdoor leader; attended Interlochen Center for the Arts; GWS #79, #84, #93)

Maggie Barker, 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (races sled dogs in North America & Europe; runs dogsledding programs in MI and MT; GWS #60, #81, #88, #91)

Stephanie Bromfield, 1329 Blue Mtn Dr, Danielsville PA 18038; 215-767-3554 (community college, retail work)

Rebecca Cauthen, Shorter College Campus Box 293, 315 Shorter Av, Rome GA 30165-4298 (GWS #97)

Amber Clifford, 475 NE 200, Knob Noster MO 65336 (Central MO State U; GWS #97)

Jeff Cohen, 1499 S Lima, Aurora CO 80012 (US Air Force Academy; GWS #81, #93)

Tamara Cohen, 1499 S Lima St, Aurora CO 80012 (foreign exchange student)

Erin Dodd, PO Box 6366, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill NC 28754; 704-689-6379 (theatre, teaching)

Mike Dodd, 1648 Joe Hinton Rd, Knoxville TN 37931 (Boston University, University of Tennessee; GWS #71)

Andrew Endsley, 213-874-8007 (film directing; GWS #77, #97)

(More listings on next page)

Kendall Gelner, 7490 W Apache, Sedalia CO 80135 (Rice University, computer programming)

Laura Gelner, 7490 W Apache, Sedalia CO 80135 (Colorado College; GWS #89)

Anita Giesy, 1015 Redgate, Apt. A7, Norfolk VA 23507, 804-623-1031 (cross-country travel, dance, massage therapy; GWS #74)

Bronwyn Jackson, Cavenove, Wellesley College, 106 Central, Wellesley MA 02181-8298, 617-283-4106 (GWS #96)

Vanessa Keith, PO Box 145, E Hardwick VT 05836, 802-472-5115 (farm work, travel; GWS #89)

Celia Kendrick, 40 Brook St, Rehoboth MA 02769 (Rhode Island School of Design, animation work; GWS #75, #82)

Kim Kopel, Intern, Strawberry Banke, PO Bo., 300, Portsmouth NH 03801 (intern at living history village; GWS #87)

Emily Murphy, St. John's College, PO Box 2800, Annapolis MD 21404, 410-263-2371 (GWS #89)

Sarah Pitts, Boston College, Keyes North Room 319, PO Box 1171, Newton Center MA 02159-1171, 617-558-9844 (GWS #96)

Emma Roberts, RR 1 Box 81, Jewell Hill Rd, Ashby MA 01431; 508-386-7084 (theatre; GWS #73, #76)

Lindsey Smith, 1800 Skyline Dr, Lincoln NE 68506 (NE Missouri State U, conservation work)

Seth Smith, 1800 Skyline Dr, Lincoln NE 68506 (NE Missouri State U, Central Methodist College, conservation & outdoor work)

Jacob Spicer, 5423 S. Dorchester #16, Chicago IL 60615, 312-752-2627 (U. of Chicago, managing furniture store; GWS #89)

Jessica Spicer, Rt 1 Box 15, Leaches Crossing 7080, Avoca WI 53506, 608-562-3969 (intern at Cato Institute in Washington, DC; GWS #95)

Seth Spicer, Lincoln College, Lincoln IL 62656, 217-732-3155 ext 612

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. WARNER, 224 Flame Tree Cir, Windsor CA 95492: Nicole (13) swimming, animals, reading; Stephen (12) baseball cards, rollerblading, swimming; Jonathan (8) sports, NES, GI Joes ••• Emily DOHERTY (4) HCR 33 Box 408, Manset ME 04656, dance, books, music ••• BURGI, E12678A Man Mound Rd, Baraboo WI 53913: Kyler (8) Star Trek, agriculture, reading; Ciara (6) dalmatians, animals, reading ••• WAGNER, 113 Fowler Rd, Cape Elizabeth ME 04107: Erik (8) sports, woodworking, gardening; Elaina (6) animals, gymnastics, art ••• Kirstina JUODENAS (10) 1657 Edgar Dillard Rd, Greenbrier TN 37073 ••• Shoshana WOODWORTH (13) 2730 Calle Anna Jean C#, Santa Fe NM 87501, soccer, drawing, animals ••• Josh WHITE (17) 10201 Adams Rd, Galena OH 43021, writing, Christianity, outdoors ••• Carolyn GLATZ (8) RFD 1 Box 736, Bristol NH 03222, nature, dinosaurs, Native Americans ••• Sara JONES (8) RR 1 Box 771C, Bristol NH 03222, art, animals, cooking ••• Julie-Ann TRUDEL (10) RR 1 Box 209, Cabot VT 05647, Earth, music, writing ••• PEARSON, 380 S 300 E, Payson UT 84651-2516: Lisa (15) drawing, writing, violin; Erik (13) Scouts, hiking, fishing; Andrea (11) reading, writing, viola ••• Glenn (9) Scouts, swimming, fishing ••• FRANK, 331 Elmgrove Av, Providence RI 02906: Daniel (11) Sega, computer, Aladdin; Sam (7) cookies, Aladdin, apples ••• Clytie CZAPSKY (14) 4478 Stern Av, Sherman Oaks CA 91423, writing, wildlife, people ••• DAVIS, 409 NE 190 Pl, Seattle WA 98155: Robin (15) Jurassic Par, ballet, directing; Jessica (10) Jurassic Park, stamps, mail ••• Ellen COUNCIL (8) 5816 NE Going, Portland OR 97218, ballet, drawing animals ••• Mary MEAD (16) 495 Erickson Rd, Centerville WA 98613, acting, instruments, reading ••• Gabriel KARABELL (5) 4147 W Pine Blvd, St Louis MO 63108, Legos, cannons, Playmobil ••• GONCAROVS, 5331 Heverly Rd, Trumansburg NY 14886: Alexandra (8) horses, history, music; Violet (4) gardening, puppets, dancing ••• Aimee MILLER (14) 5130 E County Rd 550 N, Pittsboro IN 46167, shopping, traveling, movies ••• Brook PAGAC (16) 5566 N County Rd 550 E, Pittsboro IN 46167, puzzles, traveling, outdoors ••• Haley ANDERSON (13) 124 Great Bay Rd, Greenland NH 03840, saxophone, art, nature ••• PRICE, PO Box 729, Jackson CA 95642: Cory (12) basketball, biking, gymnastics; Bevan (10) soccer, skiing, mechanics; Brianne (8) gymnastics, biking, horses ••• Micaella KINZLI (7) 2466 Whitehall Circle, Winter Park FL 32792, cooking, reading, gymnastics ••• Ashley SMITH (13) Rt 1 Box 358B, Westfield NC 27053, herbs, writing, medieval life ••• BANNON, 145 Crow Ln, Newburyport MA 01950-3401: Jon (18) electronics, physics, language; Barb (13) crafts, sports, algebra

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Homeschooling in Europe - Live in Southern France, tour Spain, British Isles, Italy, Greece, France. Academic program followed during 9-month program, September through May, 1994-95. $12,000. Write Schole, Box 10, RR1, Margaree Valley, Nova Scotia, Canada B0E 2C0, 902-248-2601.

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Play It Smart - Non-trivial, cultural literacy game for the teenage homeschooler and their parents. "A unique learning experience ... useful information encompasses cognitive processes & subjects that any literate American should possess & enjoy." (R. Swoboda, President, National Literacy Foundation). Game of the Year - 1994 (Fun & Games Magazine). Picked "Best" by *The Chicago Tribune*. Business, Law, Literature, History, Science, Technology, Music, Art... Send $33.95 ($29.95 + $4 shipping) to Play It Smart, 12221 Sam Furr Rd., Huntersville, NC 28078 or call 800-258-5302 for information.

PIANO/KEYBOARD INSTRUCTION PROGRAM for homeschoolers age 6 and up. Sample lesson $8 postpaid. Free brochure. Loki Music, Box 64, Brinklow, MD 20862.

We want to buy land in the eastern U.S. where we can legally set up our trailer for use as a vacation home. Write Ruth Matilsky, 109 S 4th Av, Highland Park NJ 08904.

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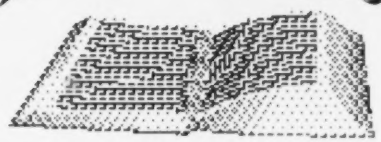
Democratic School starting in the Mattapoisett area. Allow your children freedom and responsibility, creativity, and their own innate "curricula." Elizabeth East, 9 Highland Ave, Point Connett, Mattapoisett, MA 02739, 508-758-4462.

Adventure and Experience sought by 15 yr. old male. Interests: natural history, photography, culinary arts, travel, life. Willing to work. Josh Morgan, 6011 Sierra Arbor Ct, Austin, TX 78759, 512-258-3074 or Wendy (Mom) 512-258-2123.

I need videotape of teenaged unschoolers for a sort of video version of *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* and *Real Lives*. Also need recordings of original music by teenaged homeschoolers. I'll pay for everything I use - send SASE for guidelines to Box 1014, Eugene, OR 97440.

Nurture your child's imagination. Quality Fantasy Wear! Free brochure. Imagine That ™, 11200 NW 58th St, Dept G, Parkville, MO 64152, 816-587-5171.

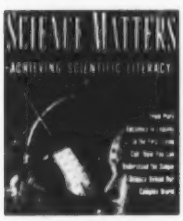
Book Reviews



Kids With Courage by Barbara A. Lewis #3132 $10.95

Barbara Lewis writes in the introduction to *Kids With Courage*, "The real purpose of this book is to help you know that you can control things that happen around you and to you." Since this is not something young people often hear, or feel, this book is an important contribution. The kids Lewis profiles are amazing, sure, but they're amazing in a believable way. They're kids who are alive right now and they've done things that others can imagine doing, too.

Some of the stories are about spur-of-the-moment courage: two boys take control of a wildly careening schoolbus after the driver falls unconscious; a girl saves her brother from a burning house; a boy spontaneously gives his sneakers to a woman who is without shoes on a winter day. Other stories are more like those in Lewis's companion book, *A Kid's Guide to Social Action*: kids working to save the environment (in very specific local ways that others could emulate), kids fighting crime (again, in very specific and believable ways), kids speaking up about children's rights and about their own heritage. This last story is about two Native American girls who lobbied to have their ancestors' real names placed under statues that had previously been displayed in the state Capitol as nameless figures. It gives a good sense of what testifying is like and how Native Americans feel about their ancestors; there is more to this book than meets the eye, because each story is so rich. All in all, it's an inspiring and valuable collection. — SS



Science Matters by Robert Haven & James Trefil #3150 $12 + p/d

When I first saw this book, I had mixed feelings about it. One part of me rebelled against any book that had a list of "what you need to know" inside its front cover. I also harbored a deeper feeling that despite my technical training, I might not "get" it.

When I actually looked at the inner text, I discovered a quite readable book that discussed basic scientific concepts like chemistry, physics, astronomy, and genetics in a comfortable way. The book defines scientific literacy as the knowledge about science that you need to understand the news of the day, to participate in the debate about public issues. It moves from basics, like "The universe is regular and predictable," to things like Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation, what radio waves are, what weather report jargon means. There is no complicated math in the book, but the authors don't talk down to the readers either, and I liked that.

The list inside the book's cover also turned out to be quite useful. It consists of science-related words like genetic engineering, evolution, and acid rain, with page references so you can look up explanations or discussions of these terms. When I hear that Congress might authorize funding for a superconducting supercollider, I can use the list (or the well-written index) to see what an SSC really is. There is also a list of additional sources if you want to read more on a particular subject.

I recommend this book for our adult and older child readers. — Ginger Fitzsimmons

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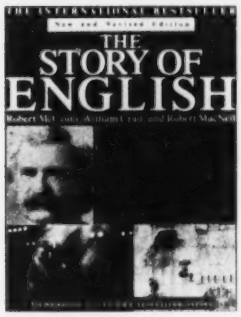
Book Reviews

continued from p. 39

The Story of English by R. McCrum, W. Cran, and R. MacNeil
#3156 $17.50 + p/h

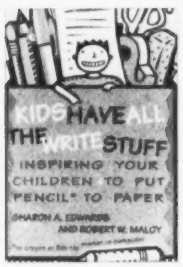


The Story of English is a vigorous and comprehensive account of the development of our language and how it has been affected by the various peoples who have spoken it. The book is difficult to classify by academic discipline because it, quite rightly, incorporates history, geography, sociology, anthropology, and politics into an always lively discussion of the language.

The history is a fascinating story of how English was created out of successive invasions of the British Isles and continuously changed as it was taken all over the globe by the forces of imperialism. The book's geographical information is integrated into meaningful contexts and beautifully illustrated by clear, colorful maps. Except for actual travel, I think this is the best way to learn geography because the reader is naturally drawn into the significance of geographical locations.

The book is based on a PBS series of twelve one-hour programs that were rich with visual images. The authors have chosen many of the beautiful photos of people, places, paintings, and historical cartoons to illustrate the densely informative but flowing and easy-to-follow text. — Maureen Carey

Kids Have All the Write Stuff by Sharon Edwards & Robert Maloy
#3130 $10 + p/h



I know that many parents feel stumped about how to help their young children become writers. They may know that conventional teaching approaches didn't work for them, but they aren't sure what to offer instead. I've often wished for a book that would give parents the guidance they want without simply replicating conventional attitudes toward children and toward the teaching of writing.

Kids Have All the Write Stuff comes as close as any such book I've seen. It is consistently respectful of children and their ways of approaching writing. An entire chapter is about recognizing the value in what children already do as writers. This is not a book that assumes children will never do anything worthwhile unless we tell them to or show them how.

The book has short but helpful passages that answer questions parents often have: how to respond to writing you cannot read, what you might do when children say they can't write, how to help kids feel comfortable using invented spelling. Though the book does talk about innovative teachers and classroom practices, most of the focus is on the writing young children do at home and how parents can be involved. — SS

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Mar.-Apr. 1994

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

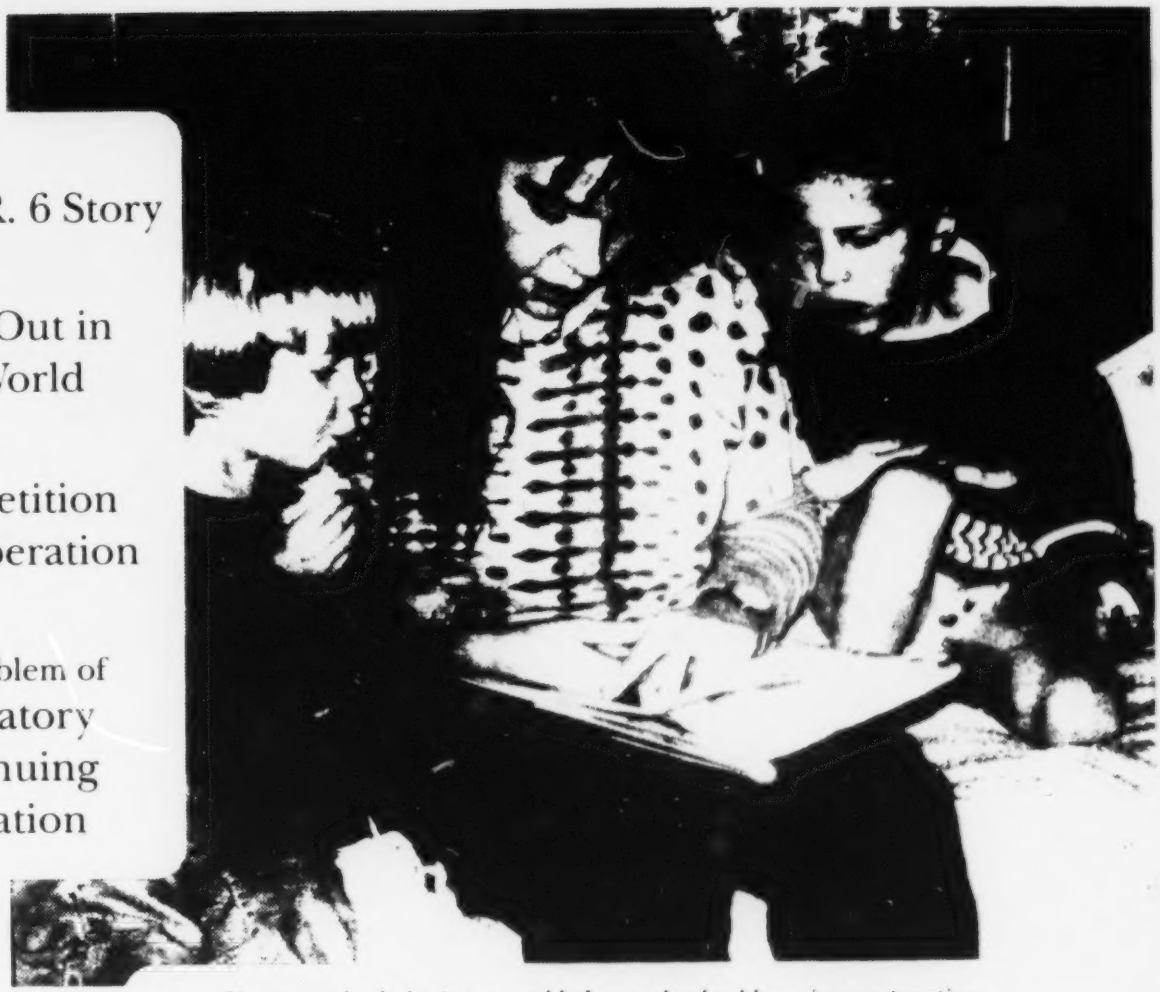
Issue 98

Our H.R. 6 Story

Teens Out in the World

Competition & Cooperation

The Problem of Mandatory Continuing Education



Sharing a book during a weekly homeschoolers' learning cooperative

Gathering Places — See p. 13

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Contents

News & Reports p. 3-7

Our H.R. 6 Story: How we researched the situation and what happened in Congress

A Mother Combines Work With Homeschooling p. 8-9

Teenagers Out in the World p. 10-12

Stories about teens doing flood-relief work, being a legislative intern, and working at a NASA office

Gathering Places p. 13-17

Informal and welcoming places for families – how they work, and what happens there

Challenges & Concerns p. 18-23

Communicating with District, Reluctant to Homeschool, Austism, School Conflicts, Anxiety, Shyness

Watching Children Learn p. 24-27

Reading, Fantasy Play, How *Not* Writing Helped, Frustrations in Learning, Chess Club

FOCUS: Competition and Cooperation p. 28-32

Kids write about how both competitive and cooperative activities feel

Letter to a Superintendent p. 33

A new homeschooler writes to her former school

The Problem of Mandatory Continuing Education p. 34-36

Interview with John Ohliger

Issue #98
Mar. / Apr. 1994

GWS

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by John Holt

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In this issue

Recently I was asked to help judge a writing contest sponsored by the organization Girls, Incorporated. I agreed to do it, but I had some misgivings, because I often think that writing contests give young people a skewed vision of what the writing world is really like. Rather than having a chance to work on a piece of writing over time, getting feedback and then revising it, kids who enter a contest submit a piece and then hear a flat "you won" or "you lost." And too often, contests are the only kind of participation in the writing culture that adults offer to young people. Adult writers typically submit to magazines or journals, show their manuscripts to helpful readers, attend workshops, listen to interviews and readings, and, yes, sometimes enter contests too. But kids often do only the latter.

As real as my misgivings about the contest were, though, I also knew, and had to admit, that writing contests had sometimes been important to me in my own growing up. Sometimes they did contribute to my development in positive ways by giving me a chance to present my work publicly or to be affirmed by a writer I respected. I can't honestly say contests are always bad.

Nor will readers be able to say that after reading the contributions to this issue's Focus, I predict. We asked kids to write about their experiences with competition *and* cooperation. In asking kids to write about this, I knew that there are some particular ways in which questions about competition and cooperation come up for homeschoolers. Some people worry that homeschoolers are being deprived of opportunities to compete with other kids, and some people also worry that homeschoolers don't have ways to learn about cooperation. But some parents worry that competition is bad or harmful, so the questions become confusing: is the goal to make sure homeschoolers have enough access to competitive experiences, or should we feel glad that homeschoolers don't have to compete as much as school kids do?

The kids, with their typical discernment and insight, argued that the issue was not so black and white. Several told about positive experiences with competition while also saying that they didn't think anyone should be forced to compete just for the sake of competing. When I think about what comes out of their collective responses, I see that it actually goes back to my own reflections about judging the writing contest. My thoughts there centered around the question of what would most help kids grow as writers and feel themselves to be members of the writing culture – which in some cases may indeed mean contests, but my point was that it shouldn't only mean contests. I see now that the kids in this issue's Focus are also talking about being included, participating, getting better at the activity in question. Sometimes this goal is served by competition, they say, and sometimes by cooperation. Thus the two are not so obviously opposed or so mutually exclusive in a young person's life.

— Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

Our H.R. 6 Story

When we sent a mailing on February 23 to all our U.S. subscribers and many support group leaders about the federal bill H.R. 6 and the controversy surrounding it, we promised that we would present the full story in GWS #98. Pat Farenga writes:

To recap the situation: H.R. 6, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is a bill that was originally passed in 1965. It's a federal bill designed to fund programs that go beyond basic education – special education and teacher training, for example. It is before Congress again this year, and if it passes, the programs now being funded would continue to be funded. Some new programs are included too.

Congressman George Miller (D-CA) wrote an amendment to H.R. 6 about teacher certification, and this amendment was section 2124(e). Miller's amendment said that each state applying for federal funds under this act would have to provide assurance that all full-time teachers under the jurisdiction of local educational agencies were certified to teach in the subject areas to which they were assigned. As I will later discuss, Miller apparently meant his amendment to guard against teachers being assigned to teach subjects for which they were not certified. He was referring to public school teachers, as we came to understand.

Learning About the Problem

The Home School Legal Defense Association's lawyers argued that local school boards might construe the language in the Miller amendment to mean that they could require teachers in private schools and home schools to be certified. On the basis of this concern, HSLDA launched a national campaign against H.R. 6 on February 15th, which was when we got a call from their office. Scott Sommerville called to tell us that a bill requiring homeschoolers to be certified teachers was before Congress and would come up for a vote on February 24th. He gave us the number of the bill and said HSLDA was "going nuclear" about this issue and urging everyone to call or write their legislators immediately.

One reason for the urgency, he said, was that an amendment to H.R. 6 which HSLDA had supported and which would have exempted home schools from the requirement had *already* been defeated. This was disturbing to hear. If such an amendment had already been defeated, perhaps the original legislation really did intend to require that homeschoolers be certified. We resolved to find out.

Scott Sommerville said that a fax giving further details would be forthcoming. While waiting for HSLDA's fax to arrive, I called my representative for information about this bill. I wanted to see the actual text of the bill and find out more about its background before Holt Associates urged anyone to protest it.

The staffer I spoke with faxed me a computer printout of the Status Profile for H.R. 6. It explained that H.R. 6 would "extend for six years the authorizations of appropriations for the programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965." These appropriations were for all sorts of programs: the Indian Education Act, for example; the National Writing Project. There was no mention of the Miller Amendment in this Status Profile, so I couldn't yet tell how certification was discussed.

I called Larry Kaseman (Larry has been active in monitoring legislative issues affecting homeschoolers both locally and nationally). He gave me some Washington phone numbers to try for legislative information. I made these calls but couldn't get much information. Staffers seemed to have the same Status Profile I had received, which didn't have the text of the Miller Amendment.

Interpreting the Language

The next morning, February 16th, I arrived to find that the fax sheets from HSLDA had arrived the previous evening. The memo had the headline, "'URGENT ALERT' CONGRESS WILL REQUIRE HOME SCHOOLERS TO BE CERTIFIED TEACHERS — VOTE SCHEDULED FOR FEB. 24." It instructed homeschoolers to call their representatives, identify themselves as homeschoolers, say they oppose H.R. 6, and then urge support for the Armey Home School-Private School Freedom Amendment if H.R. 6 *were* to be passed.

The Armey Amendment was the amendment (named after Representative Dick Armey, R-TX) that Scott Sommerville had told us about, the one that would exempt homeschoolers from the certification requirement. According to HSLDA, although an earlier version of the Armey Amendment had already been defeated, a new version was being put forth.

The memo from HSLDA gave us the text of both the Miller amendment and Armey's proposed amendment. The text of the Miller amendment read as follows:

ASSURANCE – Each State applying for funds under this title shall provide the Secretary with the assurance that after July 1, 1998, it will require each local educational agency within the state to certify that each full time teacher in schools under the jurisdiction of the agency is certified to teach in the subject area to which he or she is assigned.

HSLDA explained in their memo that this amendment could be interpreted to mean that all home school parents and private school teachers had to be certified. Their rationale for suggesting this interpretation was as follows: the definition of the word "school," as put forth in another section of H.R. 6, is "a nonprofit day or residential school that provides elementary education, as determined under State law." Another section defined "secondary school" in the same manner.

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because it would allow the situation to continue right up until the vote on the floor. I wished it could be settled sooner.

Clarifying Language Proposed

We finally got some good news on February 18th when a GWS reader from Georgia called to say that a Georgian Congressman, a Democrat, had met with concerned homeschoolers and public school activists (some public school people didn't care for the Miller amendment either!) and told them that several amendments would be forthcoming on the floor to clarify the Miller amendment and prevent it from affecting home and private schools. I was able to confirm this with my Congressional contacts and was given the language of one such amendment that I could circulate publicly. I was told it had bi-partisan support though no members of Congress wanted to identify themselves with it at this point.

On Saturday the 19th I learned that Mike Farris had faxed notices during the night urging homeschoolers not to be misled by the Democrats' overtures and to keep Congress's phones jammed. That weekend, as our phones continued to ring, the situation looked grim. Was there anything else that could be done to prevent a risky showdown on the House floor on this issue?

Larry Kaseman was attending a National Homeschool Association meeting that weekend (it had been scheduled long before the H.R. 6 situation came up). I called him there, and he said he would discuss the issue with the NHA council. When he called back it was to say that the NHA wanted to create an ad hoc coalition of national homeschooling organizations. They would sign a statement saying that while no one homeschooling group can speak for all homeschoolers, the following groups have joined to endorse the language of a clarifying amendment that seemed likely to pass.

Fourteen groups endorsed the statement. HSLDA would not endorse it, however. They agreed that it handled the issue of certification requirements, but they wanted even more from Congress. Later that day they revised the Armey Amendment again. This version of the Armey Amendment contained clarifying language similar to that endorsed by our ad hoc coalition, but it also contained language for broader protections from Congress, and this language raised other problems which later came up on the floor of the House (as we will explain further on).

On Tuesday the 22nd we received word from Congressional staffers that a bi-partisan committee of two Democrats and two Republicans had crafted an amendment that would take care of the possible misinterpretation of the Miller amendment. We then received a memo headed "Anticipated Amendments" which listed the amendments that were expected to be introduced onto the floor the following day. The memo said:

"A bi-partisan amendment will be offered ... The amendment would clarify that this requirement [the requirement in the Miller amendment] applies only to full-time teachers in public schools, and does *not* apply to private schools or to home schools.

"Rep. Armey will offer an amendment to specify that the bill's provision regarding certification of teachers applies to public school teachers only, and does not apply to any private, religious, or home school that does not receive funds under this bill."

We felt that since both amendments took care of the certification question, we could now issue a letter to our readers. We debated waiting until a vote had been taken so that we could give the fuller story, but so many calls were coming in asking what we were doing and what had been going on that we decided it was important to get some information out as quickly as possible. It took us nearly three days to get the thousands of letters printed and mailed and our staff and several volunteers worked long hours to see that the information got out. Your response to that letter has been most gratifying; in addition to the donations we have been receiving to help defray the costs, many of you included grateful letters and thoughtful responses to the entire situation. We are most appreciative of your support and perspective. We also want to thank the many people who helped us gather and disseminate the information.

The Day of the Vote

February 24th, the day of the vote, finally arrived. When I later watched the videotape of the proceedings and read the Congressional Record for the day, it was almost humorous, given the fears homeschoolers had had, to hear so many members of Congress offer their support for homeschooling. One member of Congress claimed he had been homeschooled, and others mentioned that their children were homeschooling their grandchildren. All who spoke had nothing but accolades for homeschooling.

The biggest surprise came early in the proceedings. Rep. Ford (D-MI and Chair of the Education Committee) offered the first amendment, and it completely removed the Miller Amendment and added a new section:

"Section 9508. **Applicability to Home Schools**. Nothing in this act shall be construed to affect home schools."

This amendment, which the ad hoc coalition fully endorsed and which went even further than we had hoped, became the Ford-Kildee amendment because Rep. Kildee added his sponsorship. It passed 424-1, with Rep. Miller casting the single opposing vote.

The Floor Debate — Hearing from the Representatives

In the floor debate preceding the vote on this amendment, some very important points came out. First, Rep. Ford commented:

"...As I said at the beginning of the debate on the bill, we did not believe that the Miller amendment was getting us into the area that we have always, during the history of legislation, respected, of undue federal intervention in the prerogatives of state and local school administrations. The question of whether or not homeschooling is allowed is not a Federal question. It is a state question. And it revolves around the attitudes in the various states about compulsory school attendance...

"...We had no intention, in accepting the amendment offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. Miller] which came at the very end of the markup of this bill, of doing

anything that would affect the relationship between the states and their people with respect to either private schools or home schools. Unfortunately, what has been generated is a fiction that somehow the Miller language would affect private education, which it did not. If the amendment had affected private education it would not be in the bill, because, as one of the people who came to this floor with the original version of this in 1965, I can assure this House that during all of those years we have worked very closely with the private schools.

"Now, I have discovered something. Some people who have been talking about private school choice have convinced themselves in their ignorance of the true facts that private schools do not now participate in the programs that we are reenacting here today for the ninth time since we originally enacted them. Private schools participate to a very, very large degree...

"...We will come later to another amendment which I understand they are still working on on the other side. I asked the Committee on Rules to make an amendment by the gentleman from Texas [Mr. Armey] in order last night. Unfortunately, from whatever cause... the amendment that was delivered to the Committee on Rules to be made in order was not the amendment that he was discussing. When we read the language of the amendment that was delivered to the committee, we immediately shared it with the private school authorities and discovered that they are strongly alarmed, and that in his zeal to be the savior of the private schools, Mr. Armey is actually subjecting the parochial schools to the possibility of lawsuits that we have managed to avoid for them for 29 years. We will deal with that when the amendment comes up...

"...This amendment that I offer for the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. Kildee] and myself is clear and straight... it puts the bill as if the [Miller] amendment had never been adopted...

"...I say that it is an unnecessary solution to a problem that does not exist. Because if any of us had believed that that language did in fact say what people are saying that it said, we would never have accepted it in the first place...

"...We do not approve of home schools, and we do not disapprove of them. It is none of our business. It should not be the federal government's business to intervene in that matter, and we want to keep federal education legislation as pure as it now has been for 29 years."

Then Rep. Goodling (R-PA) said that the federal government should have nothing to do with teacher certification. He added that he would rather say "qualified" than "certified" anyway, because some qualified teachers are not certified. Then he concluded, "So if you accept the chairman's amendment, then you have corrected any fear that [homeschoolers] may have, we can go on keeping in mind that everybody else is protected under the General Education Provisions Act; private and parochial schools are protected under GEPA. Therefore, we should not need any additional legislation."

Rep. Gunderson (R-WI) then acknowledged that because of the publicity surrounding it, many Representatives might want to vote for the Armey amendment. But, he said, "The problem is that the Armey amendment, as written, says that nothing in this act shall be construed to permit, allow, encourage, authorize any federal control over any aspect of any private, religious, or home school that does not receive funds under this act. The problem with that, ladies and gentlemen, is that most private schools and some home schools receive all kinds of federal money..."

Rep. Kildee (D-MI) then said, "...The attorneys at the Catholic Conference have scrutinized this language [the Armey amendment] very carefully... They feel that language is such that the federal control could be exercised over those schools that do participate. By saying those who do not participate cannot have federal control, you imply that those who do participate will have Federal control. [The attorneys at the Catholic Conference] also go on to say in their letter:

'It has also been suggested that the following sentences could be added at some time to the language quoted above: "This section shall not be construed to bar private, religious, or home schools from participation in programs or services under this act."' This sentence states a truism which only serves to underscore our concern that this provision in the Armey amendment separates private schools into two groups, schools that do or do not participate in federal education programs under HR 6 with the former being susceptible to broad government control. Highlighting the distinction exacerbates rather than alleviates the concern.

"I am sure that if the Armey amendment passes, there will be a plethora of court cases that will follow because we will be saying that those who do receive, the schools who do receive... are susceptible to broad federal control."

In the preceding days, when homeschoolers had been discussing the Miller amendment, some had raised the question of home schools that are viewed as private schools under state law. Even if home schools were exempted, would the certification requirement still be an issue for home schools in these states? Rep. Manzullo (R-IL) asked Rep. Ford about this. Was it correct, he asked, that nothing in the act would affect home schools, regardless of whether are they treated as private schools under state law? Rep. Ford replied that that was correct.

Rep. Miller, author of the original controversial amendment, then added: "What went on here in the last 4 or 5 days has nothing to do with the language in this bill. It has to do with some other agenda of organizations that decided they were going to steam up a lot of parents and a lot of individuals who are genuinely, deeply concerned about the education of their children, their right to have their children in private schools, and the right to teach their children at home. That right is honored by this committee, by this legislation, and, I believe, by every member of Congress. But somebody could not pass up the political opportunity to gin those people up and arouse them and have them spend their time, their money, and their resources beseeching Congress

on a problem that never existed.

"And if I understand the debate that has taken place here in the last few minutes, the solution to that problem now is even worse than the perceived problem they were talking about that they were going to cure. There were numerous opportunities to cure the perceived problem earlier. People chose not to avail themselves of that opportunity because they wanted the political advantage, they wanted the phone calls, they wanted the scare tactics, and they wanted the result they have now..."

At this point the vote was taken on the Ford-Kildee amendment. Then the Armey Amendment came to the floor. After Rep. Armey presented it, Rep. Ford addressed Rep. Armey and brought up a law that had been passed as permanent law in 1970. This law prohibits, in great detail, federal control of education, and after quoting from it Rep. Ford said, "I know where [Rep. Armey] wants to come out, I believe, and we agree with him on where he would like to get. The problem that [his] revised amendment leaves us with is that it repeats, unfortunately redundantly, protections that are already in permanent law, but it does not repeat them all. The lawyers in this chamber will appreciate the fact that if [Rep. Armey] is looking for a way to get himself into court, and we take action to reenact something, but leave part of it out, that is a strong enough argument to get him into court."

Rep. Armey replied, "... My response to the gentleman is that redundancy in defense of freedom is a virtue, and I do not mind committing that redundancy just for further assurance."

Ford then said that he just wanted Rep. Armey to go on record with that statement so that courts who might later try to interpret what went on in Congress that day would understand that Rep. Armey recognized that he was reenacting existing law.

Many representatives then rose in support of the Armey Amendment on the grounds stated by Rep. Stearns (R-FL): "...The Armey amendment makes explicit what I believe is the intention of the vast majority of this House – that the federal government not begin telling private educational institutions how to do their job." Make explicit, clarify, codify, reinforce, make very clear; these are the primary reasons most representatives gave for their support to the Armey amendment. Several representatives questioned whether the scurrying on the floor to fix the amendment's objectionable language would cause future problems. Armey assured the House that he would work it all out in conference after the vote and would make sure to attend to the concerns that some private school groups still had.

Soon after that a vote was taken on the revised Armey amendment and it passed 374-53.

The Aftermath

As Rep. Armey said, his amendment's language may yet be revised in conference. H.R. 6 will then come before the Senate, and I hope we won't have to go through all this again. I think that since they saw what happened in the House, the Senators will be careful not to introduce any language that will alarm homeschoolers or private school officials.

Was all of this worth the days of confusion, panic, and political posturing? Some will say, "Yes! Look at our victory." I can't share that outlook because I don't believe the end justifies the means. Some will say that if we hadn't raised such a fuss, Congress would never have listened to us. But because homeschoolers "went nuclear" so quickly, we'll never know if we could have achieved the same goal another way.

Some also say that at least now Congress knows how quickly homeschoolers are able to respond to an alert and how strongly they value their right to homeschool. I can see that that's possible, but it's also possible that members of Congress who saw their phones jammed for days about an amendment that was not in fact about homeschooling may see homeschoolers as uninformed, too quick to react, and so on. I'm concerned that if an issue ever comes before Congress that is truly about homeschooling, legislators will remember the furor over H.R. 6 and dismiss our concerns as unfounded. Maybe it won't happen this way, but I do think it's something to think about.

In a letter that Rep. Armey sent to all House members on Feb. 22, he appears to distance himself from the panic that the Miller amendment created:

"It was not until after the full committee markup that the full implication of the Miller language was brought to my attention by a New Jersey homeschooler. I turned to several lawyers for a legal opinion, including Mike Farris of the Home School Legal Defense Association. It was Mr. Farris who notified his network of members across the country about what he called a 'nuclear attack on home schooling.' I have never assumed that *that* was Mr. Miller's intention."

Several newspapers reported on the H.R. 6 vote, with headlines like "Congress Blocks Licensing of Home Teachers" and "Home Tutors Shielded from Curbs." *The New York Times* article is the one that really got my attention. Its headline was, "Home Schooling Wins Emphatic Assurance from the House," and its subhead was, "A bow to the religious right, 424-1."

This phrase, the letters we have received from readers, and the entire experience of dealing with H.R. 6 have convinced me that we need many more sources of information in the future so that homeschoolers do not have to rely solely on the perspective of one group. The Wisconsin Parents Association, including Larry Kaseman, is publishing a new national bulletin on Parental Rights and Responsibilities in Education (PRAIRIE). It contains a column that can be reprinted by organizations that subscribe, information on continuing and upcoming issues of concern and interest throughout the nation, analyses, resources, and suggestions for action. The first issue, which focuses on H.R. 6, is available for $5. Subscriptions are welcome from individuals ($20/yr) and organizations (rates vary depending on size of the organization). Address: PRAIRIE, 2545-G Koshkonong Rd, Stoughton WI 53589.

This publication is independent of GWS but has our strong support. It is an attempt to meet an important need for accurate information.

(Our Calendar, which is usually in the "News & Reports" section, appears on p. 38.)

A Mother Combines Work with Homeschooling

Leslie McColgin (KY) writes:

When we had our first child, I was coordinator of a Special Education clinic for a regional university. I returned to work shortly after Candra was born in 1984, and quickly became depressed about leaving her, commuting an hour each way to work, and having a job that required a high degree of professional dedication. I was expected to do research, serve on committees, go to national and regional conventions, be there during clinic hours from 9 to 4:30, supervise and advise students and workers, and teach a course. All I wanted was to go home and be with my new baby. I did manage to breastfeed for a while, until she was six months old.

I decided to look for a job in the public schools, since I reasoned that would offer a shorter workday, just as many holidays, and less commitment. Fortunately I found a job in a special education cooperative that served four counties, and I was able to work with a population I enjoy, preschool and special extraordinary needs children with communication disorders. Some aspects of the job were ridiculous, like going to twelve different schools in four counties to do speech-language therapy, but the second year I was there they cut the job in half and hired another person. And I got pregnant again. This time I planned a semester leave of absence, so Calen was six months old before I returned to work. But again, I was unhappy.

While I was off work after having Calen, I saw an article in the local paper about homeschooling. Up to that point, homeschooling was in the back of my mind, as I had read John Holt in *The Mother Earth News* years before. But I was still thinking along the lines of finding some alternative school situation, although I knew there didn't exist any such thing where we lived. Anyway, inspired by the newspaper article, I checked out *Teach Your Own* from the local library and then never stopped reading about homeschooling after that. My husband and I had some discussions about it, and he was very supportive. Although he does not have the same feelings about his schooling that I have about mine – he was an unremarkable student who functioned fine, while I was a straight-A student who suffered lasting trauma by losing my ability to be self-directed – he too did not see much of value in school. And some close friends of his from college were homeschooling in Pennsylvania.

So, by the time Calen turned 1, and Candra was 4, we had decided to homeschool. This was 1988. I quit my job a few weeks before school would have started, and began viewing myself as a homeschooling parent.

I think we have done many things to adjust our lives because of this decision, and it was helpful that we did these things while the children were quite young. First of all, of course, was all the reading I did to help me develop a philosophy of how we would approach homeschooling. Second, we have done a lot of things to make our home a comfortable and interesting place for children to be. If we were going to be home a lot, we definitely needed a bigger house. We had added to the house once when Calen was born, and now we did it again. The addition ended up being bigger than our original house. Among other rooms we now have a music room (what would be the family room in most houses) and a large, open room upstairs with a big table made from a sheet of plywood for projects, futons, an old TV, bookshelves, and an extra bed. Lots of people who see the house say, "How nice, your schoolroom," and I just smile and mumble something about it being a playroom and a place for projects. The music room is where the kids spend more time, and it is very special to me.

I had read *And the Children Played* by Patricia Joudry, and I loved her description of a room they had where the children put on all sorts of theatrical productions. Candra has shown an intense interest in performing since a very young age, and by age 3 was begging to get up on stage when we would take her to a performance of some sort. She also has been very musical, and we had an old upright in good condition. So I asked my husband to make the family room a music room, complete with a small stage. The piano and stereo are in there, we have boxes and boxes of items for costumes and puppets, my dad made a neat puppet theater one year, and I've also added a hammered dulcimer for me to play. Candra's main instrument is violin, with piano being secondary.

I thought giving up my income was going to be terribly difficult, but we ended up not having to do that, so I'll never know if we could have adjusted or not. What happened is that shortly after I quit my job, a friend told me about a local home health agency that was looking for a speech-language pathologist. In home health, many agencies offer contract positions with no benefits, but you are free to take as many or as few patients as you want, set your own hours, and collect a very high fee. The agency was at a low point when I started, and I only had one patient at first, but over the years they have grown tremendously and I am currently working with 8-12 patients, about 18 hours a week, which I can do in two days. I have done things like schedule patients when my husband is off work evenings and weekends, or used babysitters or the agency's daycare center (unfortunately the kids hated this place despite its convenience for me), and taken the kids with me on visits. This last is against agency policy, as at one time the director decided this would be against Medicare's guidelines on confidentiality of patient information. I disagree, reasoning that if the patient gives permission for someone to accompany me on a visit, it should be OK. I've done other work in nursing homes, a hospital, Head Start, and an Easter Seal center where my husband

works, and the kids have been welcomed at all these other places. So I just go ahead and do it occasionally on home health visits, trying not to abuse the privilege and only doing it with patients with whom I have a good, close relationship.

Last year and the year before I worked a few hours a week at the Easter Seal Center, and they let Calen stay in a preschool classroom as a "model" child. They actually were required to find kids to fill this role anyway. The first year, Candra stayed in an infant classroom and helped out. Then they decided that their daycare licensing wouldn't allow that (I don't know why they couldn't just say she was a student volunteer), but they let her hang out in the lounge. Everyone was always very impressed with her since she loves to read and would keep herself busy with books and things. Sometimes she would come and watch me do therapy or visit with her dad.

I tried getting an in-home sitter last summer when my job at Easter Seal ended, but because we live way out in the country, there were poor prospects for the job. I had one person who didn't work out at all, then another who stayed all summer but was a nursing student and went back to classes in the fall. I wasn't thrilled with her either, anyway. I wish the kids could just stay home, but they are not mature enough to stay home alone yet, their own fear of doing this being one problem and their frequent physical fighting with each other being another. I tried to find a nearby homeschooling teenager interested in such a job, but have had no luck.

Last fall, a friend of mine who is in Pony Club with us offered to babysit until tax season, when she goes to work with H&R Block. This was nice, as she has an only child and he is friends with both of my children. Her homeschooling style is different, though, and Candra wasn't always happy with her attempts to coax them into certain activities. This was probably more of a problem for her own son, though, because my kids generally do a lot of things that look obviously "academic," spontaneously, and they enjoy them, while her son is strongly resisting her attempts to get him to "do math" and "do reading."

Candra said that this boy would get interested in his math book when she helped him with it, but his mother wouldn't let Candra do this, thinking that her son wasn't doing it on his own as he should. While his mother and I are close friends, and I've given her lots of things to read about unschooling, she still thinks her son must be pushed and that I don't have to push my kids because they are naturally motivated. She might begin to see things a little differently as Calen gets older, since at 6 he is still not interested in reading, although he showed a brief interest for a few months this fall. Instead he is what we call a math maniac, and loves any kind of math book.

Now that it is tax season, another Pony Club mom is babysitting my kids at her house, and the kids like it there, although they would still rather be at home. I must admit that I am looking forward to the day when they will be able to stay home by themselves while I work, because I do enjoy what I do and the money is so nice for us and enables us to enjoy our horses, buy books, pay for lessons, etc.

Incidentally, I have ended up making at least one-and-a-half times my former salary, working less than half the time. Which just goes to show that if you go after what you want, things will have a way of working out. Or my sister would just say that it only proves her theory about my having a guardian angel.

All in all, we have adjusted our lives to accommodate homeschooling, but all of these changes have been pleasant ones that have resulted in our being more harmonious and happy. My husband only wishes that he too could find a way to work part time since he has never discovered any paying work that he likes to do.

I do get odd responses from a lot of people when they find out that I work and homeschool, although I always mention that I work part time, and that seems to satisfy them. My homecare patients love for me to bring the kids along and they all seem to think my homeschooling is a great idea. The attitude of the general public is certainly changing!

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Teenagers Out in the World

Stories about teenaged homeschoolers doing various kinds of work in the world beyond their homes.

Jessica scraping wallpaper in a flood-damaged house

Helping Flood Victims

Jessica Gray of Massachusetts writes:

In the past I've been interested in getting involved with a volunteer program that would allow me to travel and meet people. I had done quite a bit of research but always seemed to end up with the dilemma of being too young to get involved without an assisting parent or guardian. But one day I crossed paths with a man who works for Habitat for Humanity and other volunteer networks. I told him about my interest and that I was having some trouble hooking up with a program. Some time down the road he called my mom with an invitation for us to travel out to Illinois to work for one week with the flood victims. Our response was an immediate yes. It continually becomes clear to me that when you have a dream and plant a seed, at the right time it will bloom and come true.

Along with four other volunteers we left New England early on a Saturday morning. After staying overnight in Ohio, we arrived late Sunday evening in Warsaw, Illinois, our destination. Here we were served a late supper and then brought to the church we'd be staying in during our week's visit.

In Warsaw our assignment was to peel the wallpaper off the walls of an old farm house. Flood waters had reached the middle of the second floor before receding. Even when we were there, in October, water still remained in the house's cellar and in the surrounding fields and roads. The whole bottom floor of this house had been stripped down to the baseboard, but the upstairs consisted of four bedrooms, one bathroom, and four closets, all of which had between two and five layers of wallpaper put up as long as forty-five years ago. We were given the supplies we needed to strip the paper. We filled jugs with hot water and mixed it with vinegar as a soaking solution.

We ate lunch and supper every day at one of the church halls. After the flood, and up until mid-November, three free meals a day were prepared and served for all the flood victims. The part of land that was damaged by the flood is called the bottoms (lower areas), and the bluff (higher land) was left unharmed. So every day we were picked up in the morning, brought to work in the bottoms, brought back for lunch, and then after our final trip up for supper we'd shower and put some clean clothes on. At night we were often invited to go out or to visit with our new friends, but sometimes we'd just retreat to sleep.

We got a few different tours of the area and heard many different stories. All along the telephone wires, there was hay and grass draped from after the water receded. Where there had once been green fields and crops were now dead crops and fields of brown, black, and grey. Along one road we saw a roof – the house had been taken right out from under it. An odd thing was that in one yard, the whole house had floated away but yet there was a basketball hoop standing as if nothing had happened. In one house a cat had been stranded, and all that remained was its skeleton.

Some days it seemed as though our progress on the house we were working on was slow, but it was nice to know, and quite obvious to see, that just by sitting, listening, and talking with the people we were helping them. At that point, most people had a hard time asking for help, but after a while they became comfortable with our being there.

By the time our week was up, the only wallpaper left was on one wall in the bathroom. There were always at least three people at a time working together and often up to five other people working with us. That was certainly some stubborn wallpaper! But fortunately not quite as stubborn as we were.

This small town, with a population of 1882, had a total of seven churches in it. So to me this was somewhat of a culture shock. People's identities depended much more on what church they attended than I had ever seen. But coming from the outside, and viewing all the judgments and boundaries put up around religion, I have no doubt that I met some wonderful, helpful, supportive people, and I am only reminded again, and with more impact, that we are all the same. Disaster can either bring us closer together or further apart, so why not closer together?

So as a homeschooler and as a person with a responsibility and a desire to help those who need it, I feel that I've learned and gained a lot from this experience. We'll definitely be back soon to scrape some more wallpaper.

Legislative Intern

Tad Heuer (MA) writes:

Last summer, when I was 15, I worked as a legislative intern for Massachusetts State Representative Barbara Gardner, who represents my town and is Vice Chair of the Education Committee. During the spring of

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1993, the legislature passed an education reform act, which included provisions for homeschoolers. My parents worked with Rep. Gardner to give her the perspective of a homeschooling family. This provided me with a "bridge" to introduce myself. When I met with Rep. Gardner, I told her of my interest in politics and asked if there was any way I could help her at the State house. She was very receptive and said that I could intern in her office. Transportation into Boston was easy because my father works near the State house, which meant I could ride in with him.

Most of my work was helping constituents who contacted the office. Rep. Gardner's district had five towns with a combined population of about 45,000. This meant a constant flow of phone calls and letters. The office received about 25 mailings a day, which I opened and sorted into three piles: invitations, junk mail, and letters. The invitations were to breakfasts, concerts, meetings – anything with a specific date and time. The junk mail was mostly mass mailings. This left the letters, mostly asking Rep. Gardner to support or oppose certain legislation. Other letters included requests for help in securing immigration papers and questions about specific state laws. All the letters went to Rep. Gardner, who read them and returned them to me or her aides with suggested courses of action.

Telephone calls were handled in a similar fashion. Topics ranged from complaints about noisy highway workers, unsafe bridges, and excise taxes to questions about Medicaid coverage, food stamps, and rehabilitation programs. Reporters often called, and because they were working on deadlines, they could be very persistent. Once, when Rep. Gardner was unavailable, a reporter even tried to quote me as an "unnamed legislative source"! Luckily, I got him to wait for an official quote.

When people had questions about bills, I would get a copy of the bill and additional information from the committee where it had been sent for review. This information went to Rep. Gardner, who gave me her position and an outline of a possible reply. I then wrote a letter to the constituent.

When people requested information about laws, I would call the department that was most likely to have jurisdiction. One man wanted to know about the minimum age requirements for driving a riding lawn mower for a commercial landscaping business. I called the staff in the Department of Labor, found which laws applied to this case, and went to the State house library to find the law and its history. Then I could send this man a copy of the law, its interpretation, and a Department of Labor contract.

I also typed congratulation letters and citations. Each week we would scan the local papers for residents who received awards or honors. It was left to me to glean enough information from the newspaper blurb to write the note. For an important occasion, such as an Eagle Scout Court of Honor we wrote citations – poster-sized congratulations from Rep. Gardner on behalf of the House.

Some of the work was tedious. If a bill is controversial, many people write urging support on both sides of the issue. In these cases we wrote a form letter expressing the views of the Representative. We then set up a database of names and addresses for that particular issue, to update these people on any action taken. I had to type in each name and address, and the lists often ran over 300 names long.

I was also an all-purpose messenger. The State house employs pages, who are on call to deliver messages around the building, but because they are in great demand they often take a long time to arrive. Because I was always available, I received the role of instant page! This meant copying reports, attending committee meetings and taking notes when Rep. Gardner was busy; delivering amendments to the floor of the House, and delivering or picking up documents.

The Senate Legislative Education Office sponsored intern seminars almost every day. These were one of the best parts of my internship. They were given by representatives, senators, lobbyists, press secretaries, etc. They spoke on a variety of issues and always gave us a chance to ask questions. One speaker discussed Hydro-Quebecois II's plan to flood Cree Indian land to create a massive power grid for the Northeastern U.S.. Another told us about the first bill he introduced. It called for all deer killed by cars to be frozen and distributed to homeless shelters for stew meat! (It passed overwhelmingly.) The seminars were also a good place to meet other interns. Before each seminar, we had to stand up and introduce ourselves. Although all the other interns were college students, they were very friendly and didn't treat me differently because of my age.

Working as an intern was a wonderful introduction to the world of politics. Besides learning about the day-to-day life of legislators, I also improved my communication skills. This spring I am planning to attend Washington Workshops, a congressional program in Washington, DC. I am also thinking of working for a Massachusetts gubernatorial campaign this fall.

Working at NASA Office

From Indira Curry of Ohio:

I started homeschooling when I was 15, and one of the things I wanted to take up was computer repair. I'd always wanted to do that because I was always interested in computers. So I took a class at the Jane Addams Business Career Center. It was a two-hour class, five days a week. I was the top girl in my class, so that summer my teacher encouraged me to do an interview for an internship program at the local branch of NASA. NASA had started a new program called Communications, Connections, and Networking Systems. They were trying to get people who were minorities or who would not ordinarily have this opportunity to get involved in NASA and other government internships. My teacher really wanted me to do the interview so I set it up, and I got hired.

I started that June, and I was placed with the purchasing logistics department. I dealt with all of the invoices, for computer parts or different things that needed to be bought by NASA. Then I said, "This isn't enough, please give me more," so I wound up getting involved in everything that my mentor was doing – calling the different vendors to set up appointments, pricing, putting things into the data

Indira Curry at the NASA office

base, making sure bills were paid on time. When I ran out of tasks, I would help some of the other interns. I would go around and ask everybody, "Do you have anything for me to do?"

The internship lasted that whole summer. At the end all the interns received a plaque and some scholarship money. We had been waiting to see who would get the scholarship money, because they were supposed to give it to the most successful intern, but in the end they decided that we all did well, so they split it among the four of us. We each received five hundred dollars.

Then when the school year began, they asked me to continue working, so I'd go in once or twice a week. This was during what would have been my senior year in high school, and NASA granted me a full scholarship to any college I chose. Now I'm going to college and studying to be an architectural engineer.

This past summer I worked at NASA full time again, this time as a temporary configuration management support person. My mentor was on vacation, and I took over her whole job. I got to go to meetings and observe, too.

At first it was kind of difficult for the adults I worked with to take me seriously. Sometimes they would act a little condescending. But I was an only child for ten years so I knew how to get along with adults and how to talk to them. In general I think they really wanted to help make sure that the intern was comfortable. In a way, everyone was sort of my mentor, because I got to see how each one acted in a job situation and I tried to learn from all of them, whether I liked them or not.

At the end the interns had meetings with their mentors, and the mentors would evaluate their progress. I liked knowing what my mentor was thinking and how she felt about my progress, but it might have been better if I had been able to give my own evaluation, too, like I do in homeschooling with Clonlara. I like it when adults give their analysis of what is going on but the person who is being evaluated can give her analysis, too.

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Gathering Places

Homeschoolers around the country are creating places where they can get together with each other — and when they do, interesting things happen!

Resource Center and Learning Co-Op

From Debra Eisenmann of the Ozark Lore Society in Missouri:

A few years ago, I was interested in trying to get a grant or some local funding to create a resource center for homeschoolers. I imagined having a building in which we would have a library, with books you can't usually find in a public library – good textbooks, homeschooling how-to manuals, stuff like that. And then I also wanted to have microscopes, science kits, magnets, tetherballs – whatever people wanted to have available but didn't want to or couldn't afford to invest in, just for their own families. Everyone would be able to come in and use this stuff, and then there would also be someone there who would act as the community coordinator.

When I was at the Ozark Area Community Congress, a biogregional gathering, in 1990, I put up a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in homeschooling. People seemed very excited, and some wrote comments on the sheet, so after the gathering I started a newsletter and did a survey, asking everybody what they would like to have as support for their homeschooling. We held a couple of meetings in different parts of the region, thinking we'd draw different people that way. Those were meant to be organizing meetings, but they ended up not being very significant in the long run because a lot of people came to those meetings who didn't end up being part of the group later on. The whole idea of having regular meetings for the entire membership fizzled anyway, because the diameter of the area we're talking about is about 65 miles, and some people are farther away than that. There are now about 30 active families in the group, and some others who just get the newsletter because they're interested.

People liked the idea of having a resource center, although most people's strongest need was for contact with other children – finding other homeschoolers for their kids. Because we weren't able to raise the money, my original idea got shelved, but I didn't want to give up the idea of doing *something*, because all these people were so interested. I didn't give up the idea of the resource center completely; I figured that in the future, if we ever got really strong and were able to do some fundraising, it might be possible.

After some time we did manage to create a version of my original idea. We rented a space one day a week in an office that other people used during the rest of the week. In it we had mostly books – homeschooling books, good reference books, arts and crafts books – and also sample curricula, although most of our people don't use curricula. We paid to rent the space using members' annual dues, and we also held two annual fundraisers. People came by to browse through the books and sometimes to borrow them. Homeschooling magazines were borrowed more than anything else. Several people who were just considering homeschooling came by just once to look over what was available. We were very loose about the time limits for borrowing books. We did put card pockets in each book, and we asked people to write on the card what month they borrowed the book, and then we asked them to get the book back within three months. Mostly that worked.

The trouble with the office space was that it wasn't in a very central location, so it was hard for people to get to it. Recently I took the materials back to my house, and we're scanning the area to see if there's a better location. We're hoping to find something in the back of a store, or somewhere else that's regularly open during the day.

I think there's something good about having a space that isn't any one member's home. Even though our space wasn't optimal, it felt like the materials were *theirs*, that they belonged to all the members rather than to any one of us. Now when people call and want some information, and they find out it's at my home, they immediately say, "Oh, is this intruding, is it inconvenient?" They feel they can't just run over and get something; it will have to be a whole social visit, and that isn't always what they want. When we had the office space, people were able to go and look at materials even during the days when other people, from other groups, were working in the office, and I think sometimes they almost preferred that – they wanted to have a chance to look at the books by themselves without having it be part of a social visit. It felt more like a library that way. It was convenient, too; when people are coming to my home, they need to make an appointment, but when we were using a public space, they could just come by at any time during the day.

Weekly Family Learning Co-op

We also began doing other events. We had a Playfair Day on mother's day – someone who was an authority on noncompetitive games came and showed us a bunch of stuff we could do with our kids. We have a barter party for the kids every year now, because the first one was so popular. They bring their books, toys, and clothes that they don't need any more, and they swap with each other. The kids really enjoy it, and I love overhearing the conversations they have: "Well, what do you think it's worth?" Hearing them learning that process of negotiation is really nice.

This fall we've started something that I'd wanted to see for a while, but there hadn't been the right concentration of families in the right area. Now some new families have joined, and we're able to have a family learning cooperative. To give an idea of how desired this was: most families drive an hour or more to get to these Lore Days, as we call them, and I've never heard a child or parent complain. We

Parents and children at an Ozark Love Day

meet every other Tuesday in a member's home, the same home every time. These people live fairly centrally, and they have a big house and a farm. They had decided years ago to strip their house of anything damageable inside, because they were a child-centered home, so no changes had to be made when a big group of kids started showing up every other week.

The group ranges from 12-25 kids, and most bring one adult with them, sometimes two. The kids' ages range from 8 months to 11 years. The biggest concentration is in the 4-8 range. Most of them haven't yet started reading, writing, etc.

The Structure of the Day

We have an opening circle each time, with the adults and the children. We do a naming game, where we introduce ourselves, and we sing some songs. We started out wanting to have a closing circle, too, that would again involve the whole group, but we learned a lesson: by the time the closing circle time came around, at about 2 or 3:00, we couldn't even find the older kids, the kids over about 6. They were playing hide and seek in the rooms upstairs, or they were out in the haybarn, and nobody wanted to come and sit in a circle again. Besides, what we mostly wanted to do during the closing circle was talk about what we wanted to do at the next meeting, and the kids were bored with that. That was grown-up stuff. So after about two tries we decided we'd just do the closing circle with the adults. Now after lunch the adults reconvene and discuss what happened that day and any special plans for the next time.

We have a fair number of committed anarchists among the adults, and then some others who are fairly strict in their homeschooling – the kids sit down to lessons and have to do workbook pages for a certain amount of time a day. There are also some people who are sort of in the middle, who feel they would like their kids to learn how to do some focused activities, and they feel, as one woman said, "If the kids are just going to play, we could invite kids to our house, we don't need to drive all the way out here for that." So we hashed these differences out for the first couple of weeks, and what we came up with was a mix: we do the organized circle at the start of the day, and then the older kids are free to take off, and they do. They're starting to form lots of different webs of friendship. They do their own thing with adults nearby in case a fight starts up or one child feels left out or something.

The toddlers usually stay in the house in the mornings, and we do circle games, yoga, a loose kind of program of things for them to do with adult direction. Then the little ones have lunch while the big ones are still outside, because that's calmer for them. Then the big kids come in and have their lunch, and the little ones can visit with their older siblings. We also have a separate room upstairs that we've designated as the toddlers' place, because some of them freak out around a big crowd of people and just want to hang on to their mothers' legs. So they can go to this room if they want to go to a quiet place when everybody's in the house at once, and there are some things for them to play with there.

We've fallen into a routine of having a story told after lunch. One father is our best storyteller – he's really into storytelling, and his emphasis is on stories from different cultures, so we've had stories from South Africa, Romania, Hungary, Bolivia, and he always gives a little description of the area first. The stories usually last about twenty minutes, and then afternoons are informally designated as show-and-tell time, unless it's such a gorgeous day that the kids only want to run back outside again. We've had both adults and children present things during show-and-tell time. One of our older kids brought in her computer and showed everyone how she had learned to play the piano using computer lessons. An adult gave a lesson on how to make divining rods out of coat hangers. Not as many kids were interested in that – we had only one child there, but eleven adults were there. That's what's nice, though – the kids don't have to come to these things, because they have other things they can do.

Meanwhile, the adults are getting a lot out of the group, too. We're having some regular discussions among ourselves now. Most of these people have been feeling very isolated for a long time, so there's a real vitality in the conversations as people find out that their far-out, unaccepted views are shared. The conversations have been very personal, which is interesting in a large group of people who hardly know each other.

We also have some focused activites that are for us, not for the kids. One of our members used to teach English in Mexico, so he is fluent in Spanish, and he decided he could teach Spanish to the kids. None of the kids wanted to stay, but there

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was a whole room of attentive adults who really wanted to learn Spanish, so now that's a regular feature for us.

It's been a real eye-opener for us to see what the kids will and won't stay for. It was disconcerting for some of us who had these great ideas of what we thought the kids would like, and the kids just took off for the haybarn. Some people felt offended, some felt worried, some felt a loss of control, but we've analyzed it and discussed our feelings about it, and decided that it really is best if we don't have a captive audience. We're finding out what the children do like, and it's challenging us. They clearly like the storytelling, and they have liked some of the show-and-tell; the girl who showed the computer had a full house of kids, and some adults too.

We have one adult-initiated activity going on. The Missouri Department of Conservation has a Conservation Pioneer program, and they send you materials, posters, books, booklets, pamphlets, everything. It's kind of like Scouting – you can earn points for doing different nature activities – but we're skipping the point system because nobody feels the need for that. We're using their suggestions for activities, though, and some of the kids are keeping notebooks about their experiences and observations. For example, there's an old pond near this house that some beavers took over, and some of the kids have been hiking out to the pond regularly and tracking the progress, which has been really interesting because the beavers got flooded out this winter, and everyone thought they would just disappear, but they came back and started rebuilding. A bunch of the kids are really enjoying that.

We have a general rule that if you're not interested in what's happening in a particular room, you go somewhere else, and that's true for rooms where children are doing things, too. We had a problem with that in the beginning. I found – I guess because my child is especially sensitive to this – that when adults stand around having adult conversation in the children's space, it can be very invasive and dominating, even if the children are just having free play. Somehow because our voices seem so loud and important, the children kind of had one ear cocked all the time, and they weren't free to concentrate on what they were doing. So that's how we made the rule that if you aren't doing what's happening in the room, don't talk there.

Organizing Around Other Issues

I don't know exactly how much contact there is among the families between times, because nobody has to report back to me, but I know there's been some. A lot of kids have found friends who didn't have them before. There are three girls who are 10 or 11, and they've found each other and are now sleeping over at each other's houses and so forth. There are three families with children close in age, and they are considering doing their homeschooling cooperatively, using the Oak Meadow curriculum. Watching the adults find each other is equally gratifying.

Unlike a lot of other homeschooling groups, we have many fathers very actively involved. It's common around here for people to work at home – either they grow food for the local markets, or they make crafts and sell them, and I know one family runs a computer programming business from home. Most people who move to this area want a rural life and don't plan to commute to a 9-5 office job. Having the fathers involved adds a very nice dimension.

Although our group came together around homeschooling originally, and that is still our focus, we are also finding common ground in other areas and have been networking, via the Lore Society, for a variety of good works. For example, we generate our own local, alternative resource lists (published in our newsletter). Our most popular one was a list of "recommended" and "not recommended" health care practitioners, as reviewed by our membership. As no one else has done this sort of resource development or identification in the Ozarks before, we are filling a real need for the whole community. Likewise, our newsletter and our gatherings have served to coalesce the community around stream monitoring, forest watching, co-op food purchasing, and more.

An Indoor Park in the City

Jutta Mason, of Toronto, first wrote about her group's Indoor Park in GWS #68. We asked Jutta to tell us more about how the Indoor Park works and what goes on there.

Setting Up the Space

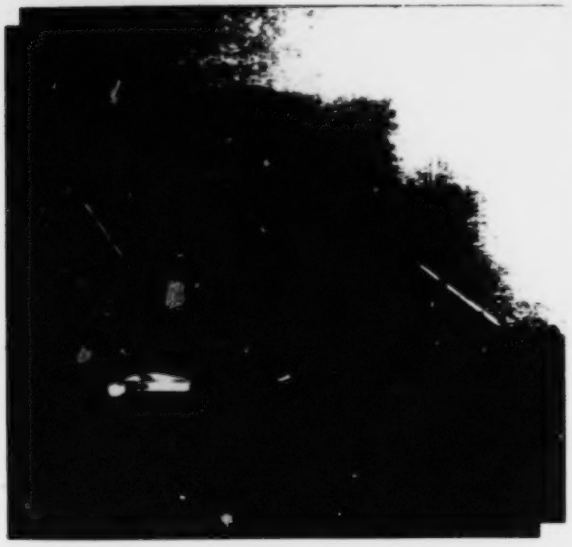
When you have small children in a Canadian city, it's hard to find places to go with them in the wintertime. As is probably also true in the U.S., every place you go is usually totally structured – it's called "Kindergym" or something like that and the kids all have to do prescribed activities. When my children were young, that didn't appeal to our family, and so nine years ago I got together with some others in the neighborhood and approached one of the community centers. We asked if we could have some hours that didn't have any program going on.

At the beginning, we had to persuade the people at the center to let us have unprogrammed time. They found our request so peculiar, and they wanted to offer us all the activities that they were trained to run. We said they could try it, but I think it was pretty painful for them, because in a situation where the kids are not at all being prodded to do those activities, they just ignore an instructor who wants to get something going. It didn't work, so they stopped after a couple of times.

Activities, Not Programs

We now have between 100 and 200 people who come once a week. After about the second or third year, we were about half homeschoolers and half not. I never wanted to have any limitations on who could come there. After about five years, the Park seemed to have enough of its own population that it wasn't necessary to promote it - in fact, now we even make jokes about not telling anyone about it, because sometimes it can get very crowded.

After about the third year, we decided that when people get together, it works much better if there's food, so food became a really important part of what went on there. That's interesting because in most public spaces, food has been legislated out of



At the Indoor Park, many things happen at once. Here older children play hockey around a young child on a tricycle.

existence, because of health rules and because of rules against using a public space to make money. We just disregarded those rules. It was too complicated to arrange a potluck, because it was always an open thing and people would come who hadn't known that it was going to be a potluck, so in the last three years we've had one woman who brings the food, and she's a very important part of what goes on there. She sells her food, and she happens to come from Guatemala where she sold food on the street as a child. She does charge more than her raw materials, but she really doesn't earn much money from it. We've also promoted craftspeople and cottage industries – they come and sell their stuff, which is also totally against the rules. Somehow there are enough of us that the authorities, and the public health department, just ignore this violation. In fact, the commissioner of the Parks and Recreation Department in the city came through once and saw all of this, including one woman who was selling vegetables from her farm, and he said it was wonderful, he loved it. It seems to me that there's a gap, right now, between what people would like and what their rules allow them to do, so it's not uncommon for people to try something outside of the rules and then have covert, or even overt, support from the very people who are supposed to be against it.

Our not having programs doesn't mean that everything just grows on its own. I know that if there aren't a few people who really look after things – trying to see if there are new building components for the kids to use, or making sure that the gym is set up in a way that allows various different activities to happen, or trying to make sure that there are new things appearing from time to time, or replenishing some of the costumes that wear out – if these things aren't attended to, the kids are more likely to fight with one another. We have never assigned people to these jobs, which means that I end up doing many of them myself. That's how it often ends up in these situations, but it seemed to me some years ago that I ought to regard what I can do, the things that I notice, as gifts rather than as onerous duties. I've decided that it's fortunate that I am able to build components for the kids to work with, for example, instead of complaining about why someone else doesn't do it. And from time to time someone becomes interested in doing a particular job. Right now, for example, we have a woman who does our newsletter, and she's really great at it. She had initially felt somewhat shut out because she had trouble making friends there, but for that reason she feels sympathetic to people who are new and might not know what's going on, so that led to her putting out a one-page newsletter every few weeks. So that happens every once in a while – a new person comes in and is a gift to us as well.

So many different things go on in the space that it's hard to describe them all. One of the things I've recently noticed is in what interesting ways the kids use whatever is available to them. Since there's not very much money to buy equipment, they'll use whatever is available. We've had a bit of a struggle with the rec center about this. They have two very heavy-duty hockey nets, and they're so strong that the kids can climb up on them and it makes a kind of hammock. I've noticed that the new kids, who often feel overwhelmed because they come into this space that's so filled with activity, will climb up on top of the hockey nets and just watch. Sometimes they'll do this for the first several times that they come. After a while they'll begin to shout down to the other kids below, and then gradually they leave the hockey nets for periods of time. This allows them to see everything but be somewhat apart from it, to gradually make sense of it and see how to fit in.

We also have dollies with wheels that are supposed to hold stacks of chairs, and the kids do all sorts of things with them. They just don't have the same categories of what things are supposed to be used for. This can be quite difficult for adults to watch, but we're trying to get people to see this in a positive way, that it's not a misuse of the equipment but a creative look at another function.

Handling Conflicts

Sometimes we run into difficulties, especially when new adults come and see an activity that scares them. For example, we have people playing ball hockey in amongst the crawling babies. The hockey players do have their own section, but the babies crawl into it. And sometimes the hockey spills over into other parts of the gym. Some adults have an urge to make a rule: "Hockey is only allowed over here." Then we would have to enforce the rule. Whereas I've been trying to promote an approach – and I think it really does work – in which we force ourselves to pay attention and see who exactly is playing in a way that doesn't work in the space. It's often only one or two people. I try to deal with those people, and not in a rude way either, but just to say, "Look, what you're doing just doesn't work in this space." That works very well, because you're

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going right to the heart of the problem, instead of throwing up a fence around a whole activity and then having to police the fence.

Alison Stallibrass's work inspired me in this regard, helped me to see the genius of children. It's so easy to see, when children are together, and free. It's so impressive how they manage. When children do something that's problematic, I try to engage with them, rather than trying to shut them down. I think talking directly to the kids works for a couple of reasons. The little ones probably respond because they're being spoken to by someone other than their mother, and that's kind of daunting. The older ones respond because they're being spoken to seriously, instead of being yelled at. Sometimes kids will get mad when we talk to them, and then they'll go to their mothers, but it seems to work better that way than if I went to their mothers first and said, "Enforce the law."

It's not that common for a child to come up to adults who are talking and ask for help, or be upset about something going on among the kids, and I think that's mostly because they have interesting stuff to do. I notice that when we let that lapse – if the materials break or wear out and we don't fix it, if we don't keep the kids supplied with interesting materials so that they can use their energy – they're more likely to start clobbering each other and then come over and complain to us.

One of the worst toys we have, the one that causes the most conflict, is these plastic cars that you can ride in. We didn't ask for them; the community center bought them for their own purposes and then thought they were doing us a favor by letting us use them. They are just about the only dangerous thing we have, and there are only three so there's an artificial scarcity – they are very desirable, and not everyone can use them. So with something like that, fights and tears are very common. I'd like to get rid of the cars, because my attitude is that I try to make sure there's plenty of everything, if possible. If there aren't enough balls, I move heaven and earth to try to get more, rather than asking people to line up for them. I know other people see this differently and think it's helpful for kids to learn to wait.

Not all the activity is athletic. We have costumes, and the kids use those, and sometimes we put out clay. There's also a woodshop upstairs, and some of the kids will go up there and work with great concentration. Sometimes they gather in groups, and when you see a few kids huddled in a corner deep in conversation, and you see that no adult has gotten them in that circle, it's very moving. There's also skating outside, which the kids do in nice weather, and a pool that they can use.

Adults Making Connections

While the kids are doing all this, the adults talk. A few come there and read, but most want to talk. You'd think it would be too loud for adults to talk, but the space is big enough and even though the kids are running around, they aren't usually loud. Often we play music, and that helps calm things down and makes everyone feel glad to hear it.

People do make connections with one another that they follow up on outside the Park, and it's a big thrill for me to see all these friendships starting. Some of the homeschoolers have used it to find each other. I found out recently that some people who met at the Park have now been meeting to discuss childhood illnesses and how to treat them naturally. Then, I recently got a letter going around about something that was happening at our children's hospital that didn't seem so good to me. I learned about it because the child of one of the women who comes to the Park was hospitalized. Of course we immediately got two pages of signatures, and this huge hospital is planning to change its policy. So this is the sort of thing that can happen when you get people together.

It certainly seems that people yearn for a sense of their neighborhood, for involvement with their neighbors, and the idea of a hospitable place is very attractive to people. I've always had a strong sense that as homeschoolers, as people who have to more directly invent our community, we have more inclination to create hospitable spaces. And then we shouldn't hoard them, but should make them available to others too.

Further Reading

On homeschooling support groups:
GWS #65, #67, #80, #85

On Learning Cooperatives:
GWS #62, #70, #77 (writing club), #85 (book discussion groups), #94 (teen groups)

On strengthening community life:
GWS #62, #64, #65, #69, #70, #72 (interview with Alison Stallibrass), #88 (interview with Bill Berkowitz)

Being Me and also Us, by Alison Stallibrass
(#1464, $19.95 + s/h.) A thorough description of one of the best gathering places for families, the Pioneer Health Center. Reviewed in GWS #79.

Cohousing, by K. McCamant and C. Durrett
(#1230, $21.95 + s/h) The cohousing movement has caught on in the U.S. as more and more people are interested in sharing some living or dining space with others. This beautiful book tells you everything you need to know about the cohousing idea.

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Challenges & Concerns

Communicating With School District

Linda Wyatt (NY) writes:

This is our second year of official homeschooling. Our school district requires very little: a program description form at the beginning of the school year, four quarterly reports, and a year-end assessment (which can be a written narrative by a parent for the first few years).

The program description form is both sides of one sheet of paper with a list of 16 subjects. Each subject has about a 3/4" space in which to write your plan for the year. The instructions read: "Please describe briefly what you will be teaching in the following areas (give names of any books to be used)." Last year I wrote in a few concepts for each subject and sent a list of resources we have. Each quarterly report is basically the same form (only with no instructions). I found these forms to be useless to me and to have no real relationship to what we really do.

I struggled with this over the summer, trying to decide how to approach the school district for this year. I finally decided that using these forms would be basically dishonest, or at least misrepresenting our educational philosophy and reality. Instead, I wrote a letter and included a list of new resources and possible field trips. The letter went, in part, as follows:

"The plan of instruction forms you sent, and which we used last year, do not give a true picture of what Simon really does. I have decided to write this in a way to give you a better understanding of what we do.

"We believe that learning is not limited to specific activities at specific times. Simon directs his own learning by choosing activities that interest him and meet his own needs. Because of this, I cannot give you a plan for what he will cover over the next year. What I can do is describe the interests he has now, the resources we have available, and the kinds of activities we normally do."

I continued for a page and a half, describing some of our projects and some of Simon's interests for each of the subjects required. For example, I wrote, "In math, Simon is learning how mathematics is involved in almost every other subject. He is using maps to measure distances between places. He is performing simple scientific experiments and using math to interpret the results. Some days he wants me to provide math problems for him to work on. We plan to continue exploring the many different mathematical applications."

When I heard back from the school district, I was amazed. This is what they had to say:

"... I agree with you that learning is not limited to specific activites at specific times and the forms are guides, not strict requirements. However, inherent in a Program Description is some indication of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be taught and learned which are indicative of the skill level, as well as Simon's specific interests.

"After reading your letter I have some indication of the specific program in writing (sentence structure and punctuation), science, health, physical education, art, and geography. In reading and math, however, I would like to ask you to submit a brief supplemental letter describing a bit more specifically the skills (based on Simon's knowledge and interests) which your instructional program will focus on.

Thank you for your interest in Simon's schooling. Don't hesitate to call..."

My first reaction was, "You're thanking me for my interest in Simon's schooling? I have no interest in his schooling. If I did, I would send him to school! I am, however, very much interested in Simon's *education*."

Didn't I write that we have no instructional program? I realized that she completely missed the point of my letter. I believe she is trying to be understanding (as opposed to "trying to understand"). After all, she did mention "Simon's interests" twice. Do some people think that "following a child's interests" is when you decide what those interests will be and then allow a child to follow them?

Trying to decide how to respond to the letter pointed out to me a real dilemma. I would like comments from anyone who feels strongly either way, or anyone else who cares to comment. Is it my responsibility to "go along to get along," fill in the forms, mind my own business, keep the school district happy and leaving me alone (as well as avoiding any possible repercussions for other families)? Or do I need to explain to the school district that we homeschool not to have school at home but precisely because what we do is significantly different from what schools do? How important is it that educators really understand that there is another way? Can they ever really understand? Who needs to tell them? Or will they, if left alone, learn it themselves in their own time?

What I ended up doing felt like a cop-out. I wrote a letter with very specific "educationese" comments – things like reading comprehension and retention, increasing speed and accuracy of arithmetic computations, etc. The school district was happy and probably wondered why I didn't just say so in the first place.

Child Reluctant to Homeschool

Kathleen Donnelly of New Jersey wrote last spring:

We are a family with four children. Three are in school right now. Two are in first grade and one is in kindergarten. Meghan, who is in first grade, had a tough time adjusting to school. Being away from home all day was difficult for her. She cried every night and every morning before school. Of course, this broke my heart and so I began to research homeschooling. As a result, we decided we would

fighting, and right afterwards I went to the office and reported it. There was no one around, and I always remember that, to this day: there was no one around when there was supposed to be security. I explained to the principal that I had been in a fight, although I hadn't started it, and he suspended both me and the other girl. Now, I was one of the top people in the ninth grade. I had been selected to represent the school, so it's not as if none of these people knew me. But I got suspended anyway.

My mother was really upset about it, and when we went in for a conference right before I returned to school, my mother asked the principal to take the suspension off my record. By this time the girl had changed her story about five times, and it was quite obvious that I was telling the truth, but the principal wouldn't take the suspension off my record. My mom said, "If you cannot protect my daughter, I'm going to have to take her out of the school system." The principal was flabbergasted, and he said, "Oh, you don't have to do that," but he wouldn't take the suspension off. So my mom took me out of school, and we got in contact with some people whose children were homeschooling with Clonlara.

At first I couldn't stand the thought of being at home, and I cried a lot that first year. But gradually I saw that I could go at my own pace, and I really loved that, because a lot of times at school I was completely bored. I would tell my teachers, "Please give me some type of challenge," and they said, "You have to go at the same speed as everybody else." I was even in an advanced program, and they said I should be happy with that, but it was still boring.

Now, looking back, I realize that in a lot of ways I never fit in at school. I didn't care what people thought, I talked the way I wanted to talk, not the way some other kids thought was acceptable, I dressed the way I wanted to dress, and I refused to be in any clique. I was really independent. They had cliques with different names, and some of them asked me to join, but when I learned what you had to do to join, I said no. I told them, "'If you're going to like me, you're going to like me for who I am, not for some mold you put me in."

Handling Anxiety

Deborah Goldeen (CA) writes:

I would like to hear from other GWS readers on the subject of anxiety. John Holt once said something to the effect that much of what was done to children in schools was done for the purpose of alleviating adult anxieties. We live in an increasingly anxious world, and adult anxiety is pressed down on the heads of children at younger and younger ages.

With this I heartily agree. However, by stepping out of the school system, by taking that burden off my children, I have found that I am confronted with an enormous amount of anxiety myself. I asked one mother who had put her children back in school if she enjoyed having her time back. She said that wasn't a big deal, but she was very relieved not to feel anxious anymore. So I know I am not alone. What are the ways people have found to cope with this?

Shy 6 Year Old

Andrea Natkin (IL) writes:

I am the mother of two girls, Mara (6) and Clara (3), and I have been interested in homeschooling since Mara was an infant. I have read many books about homeschooling and we are quite involved with our large local homeschooling support group. Our closest friends are all homeschoolers. So, you ask, what could be the trouble? Well, it is a lot of things!

'A deep inner voice tells me that homeschooling is the right thing to do for Mara. I heard that voice when she was still quite young and continue to hear it. When we are with groups (large or small) of people, familiar or unfamiliar, Mara tends to remain close by my side as a passive participant, quiet and shy yet attentive to what is going on. She prefers to observe the activity from the sidelines, staying away from the center of it all. If anyone directs any attention towards her she shies away even more and can become

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homeschool our children starting this coming school year.

But now, Meghan has adjusted to school. She likes it. She's against homeschooling (my other children would like to try it). We don't want to force homeschooling on her. We're not sure now what to do. Should we force homeschooling or let her choose to go back to school, even though it is not an ideal learning environment?

Can you suggest any books or articles where parents were faced with this dilemma? Are there any past issues of GWS that address this issue? We're very confused right now and need some insight.

[SS.] I replied:

... I'm enclosing an article I wrote some time ago that may be useful ["When Homeschooled Children Want to Go to School," in our Reprint Set 2]. Also, Susan Defosset writes about the issue in GWS #91, and there [were] responses in #93.

Briefly, no, I certainly wouldn't force Meghan to homeschool – I couldn't edit a magazine that talks about how force and coercion are antithetical to learning and then say that (and indeed I really don't think it would be right to force her). One option would be to homeschool your other kids, the ones who want to, and then see what happens. I know several families who have some kids in school and some kids out, so even if that remains your situation for some time, it certainly can be workable. But it's also possible, of course, that your daughter will change her mind about homeschooling once the rest of the family is doing it and she sees what it's like. Or once the summer begins and you start doing more activities as a family, rather than sending the kids off to school.

Other things to keep in mind, it seems to me, are: your daughter may consider it something of a personal victory that she overcame her fears about school and is now happy there. She may see your suggestion of homeschooling as a way of taking that victory away from her, even if you don't see it that way at all. Also, of course, she may have things at school that she genuinely likes, now, and she may not want to do without those things. Here you may be able to talk to her (if and when she becomes open to talking about the subject) about how it's possible to keep some parts of school that she likes, even if she homeschools. For example, she may not know that she could still be friends with the same kids, or do some of the same activities, or whatever. For her to make an informed choice, she does need to know or at least get a feel for what homeschooling could be like, but you don't want to force that information on her. Just make it available. I think you can do this in a natural way since the rest of the family is getting into homeschooling – if you start to go to meetings of homeschooling groups, for example, your other kids will probably naturally start to meet homeschooling kids, and Meghan will see that other kids are homeschooling, too, that it's not just an idea your family has (I wouldn't be surprised if right now she thinks all kids her age go to school). I certainly wouldn't pressure Meghan into homeschooling, or make it seem as though you'll only be happy with her if that's what she chooses, but again, it'll be quite natural for your family to be exploring the homeschooling community and making some plans (or doing some brainstorming) about the coming year, which will make it easier for everyone, including Meghan, to imagine what homeschooling could really be like. ...

Kathleen now writes:

What you said about Meghan overcoming her fears of school made much sense. I was so concerned about getting her out of school, I forgot to praise her for adjusting and sticking it out. So one day I sat with her at the kitchen table and said, "I want you to know, Meg, that I'm very proud of you. You went to school every day even though you didn't like it. You were very brave. I'm very proud of you."

I stopped trying to talk her into homeschooling. I just accepted the fact that she would probably choose to go back to school in September. I was happy that at least my two boys still wanted to learn at home.

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before the start of school, she said, "Mommy, I would like to try homeschooling." Boy was I thrilled! So now we're a homeschooling family and the kids seem very happy with it. Once in a while I'll hear, "I liked real school better." I ask why and listen to their reply. I let them know that they can go back if they want to. So far no one is going back.

I think that without your letter I would have kept trying to convince Meghan about learning at home. It would have become a battle or power struggle. I wouldn't have realized that she'd made a great accomplishment that fall. I would have lost out on the chance to congratulate her.

Autistic Child

Deborah Solinas of Maryland writes:

This is my third year of homeschooling my two older children, one of whom has a communication disorder. In addition, I have been working at home with my third child, who is autistic, and she is in fact doing much more in math than her peers in her Special Ed school. My major concerns about homeschooling my autistic daughter are not academic – both my disabled children are doing better academically than other similarly disabled children. I am most concerned with teaching them the social skills that they will need to be independent. As I am also autism-affected (both my mother and I have a number of mild autistic traits, although we are both unlabeled, and my only sibling is severely autistic), I feel quite inadequate to do this by myself.

It is scary to take a normal child out of school, but I find that a couple of months of homeschooling usually cures that. The stakes are much higher with a special child. A parent is bound to wonder if she is ruining her child's chances of an independent life. The safety net of Special Ed may be an illusion, but it is hard for a parent to leave it behind. I'm glad that I homeschooled my less disabled daughter from the beginning first. It makes homeschooling my autistic daughter easier to contemplate.

I am not a total unschooler, but I do try to involve my children in educational decisions and pick up on their enthusiasms. I don't totally unschool because my husband would go nuts and because I need some structure to accomplish a goal. Setting a global goal is not sufficient - I need specifics to accomplish anything. I still find it very hard to keep the house neat, unless I am given specific goals. Also, my daughters need to be taught things that they may not see the need for. Unfortunately, there will probably never be a time when my disabled children just "pick up" either social or language skills. Finally, I have a lot of stress in my life and can't handle any more. Unschooling totally would be stressful. So, for right now, I ask that each child cover each subject each week and each child gets a choice of how that is done.

I wanted to let GWS readers know that any child who needs special services (Speech & Language, Physical Therapy, or Occupational Therapy) can get them even if he is not enrolled in a public school. The legal criterion is educational necessity. If that is demonstrated, then by federal law the child is entitled to those services. I have heard of school systems trying to require that the child getting those services be in the public school system, but they aren't allowed to demand that.

Whether a family wants to get involved with the school system is another question altogether. A school system may try to hassle a homeschooling family with a special child. I know that when my review came up last year, I got a *very* thorough review from a supervisor. It went up to, but not beyond, the law in Maryland. Interestingly enough, most of the challenging questions ("How do you know your daughter is learning if you don't test her?" "Why don't you teach spelling?") were about my normal daughter.

School Conflicts Led to Homeschooling

More from Indira Curry of Ohio:

At first I was unsure about homeschooling, but I ended up feeling very happy about it. I had gone to private and public school and I enjoyed both of them at the time. But the others were jealous of me, or I just didn't fit in. Finally one girl who didn't know me, but who was a known troublemaker, decided she was going to pick on me just because she didn't like me. So she made up a story that I liked her boyfriend. While things were getting worse and worse between us, I tried having mediation, where you tell the counselors what is going on and try to work it out. But that didn't help. I told the principal and I told my teachers what was happening, and I said I was not going to start a fight because I don't believe in fighting over things like this. But they didn't listen, and they allowed the fight to happen.

Finally one day we wound up

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distressed. I often wish I could wear a sign around my neck saying, "Ignore Mara!"

Mara opposes any thought or idea of taking classes or lessons of any sort. I think the discomfort she has with groups of people and with any direct attention to her performance stops her. Even now, with her absolute fascination with horses, she quickly dismisses the idea of riding lessons. No amount of coaxing, cajoling, enticing, can persuade her. She stands firm. So far, the only exception is the ceramics class we are currently taking. I think this class is a success in part because of the instructor, who is a quiet, low-key person and is sensitive and understanding with the children in her classes. Additionally, Mara can choose the project she wants to make, is allowed to work at her own pace, and when she needs help moving onto the next step, she waits patiently for the teacher to help her while enjoying the opportunity to watch the others doing their projects. Also, her sister takes the class with her.

I know that Mara is disinclined to do or try something unless she is very sure she can do it well or right. I remember this while watching her learn to walk. She didn't go through the process of walk, fall, walk, fall very much. Instead she just started walking, and when she did, she hardly ever fell. The same with toilet learning. She never really gave up diapers until she was absolutely sure she could go without wetting, and sure enough we had very few accidents. I don't know how she does it, but I've seen her perform this over and over again.

Mara doesn't possess the kind of curiosity that says, "I need to find out what this is all about, no matter what." She must first feel safe; then she explores. This safe feeling comes slowly, and depending on the situation, can take anywhere from a couple of hours (playing with a friend one-on-one) to months (getting comfortable enough to explore the equipment on her own at the playground).

Naturally, homeschooling appeals to me because of these characteristics of Mara's personality. Earlier I felt that because of the kind of person she was (shy, introspective, quiet, sensitive), a traditional school program wouldn't serve her well, and I would keep her home, allowing her to develop emotionally at her own pace. Because of her fragile self-image, sensitivity, and dependence on me, a push too early into school would, I felt, put her at great risk. How would she learn anything if emotionally she was filled with anxiety, apprehension, fear because suddenly she was without me or things were going to fast or she didn't understand something? How would she flourish, grow, thrive, succeed? Instead I felt that when she was older and had ample time to develop a good solid sense of self along with an intact self-esteem, she'd be better able to handle the separation from me and the experience of school. Well, Mara will be 7 in March and she is still nowhere ready emotionally or interested mentally in the prospect of school.

Through all the reading I've done, I've developed a greater knowledge of and trust in the inherent curiosity children have about the world in which we live. My husband Bill, on the other hand, is skeptical about the whole process and doesn't trust that learning will happen when a child is ready. He believes that a child must be taught or shown something over and over again until it sinks in. Basically, he would feel much better if Mara were in school. However, he is a very sensitive, loving father and will not insist on school at the expense of Mara's emotional spirit. We've discussed various ways of how to homeschool Mara, but because we are philosophically worlds apart, we each have a very different idea of how to accomplish this task.

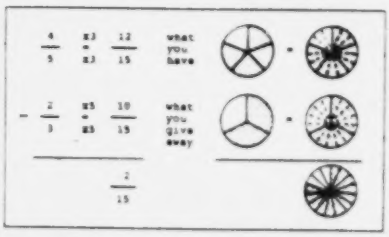
I favor a more unschooling approach because Mara resists anything formal, especially if I've thought it up and think it is important, and my life is so full already. I'm a La Leche League leader, a childbirth educator, a partner in my husband's business, a mother of two, the president and newsletter editor of a food co-op, and a homemaker. I myself am not a very structured, regimented person.

Bill would prefer if every day I were to introduce Mara to something or teach her something. I am not sure I can live up to that or that it is even necessary or effective. Bill strives to teach Mara things all the time and he thinks about it constantly, even while he is at work. I think this must be pretty stressful for him too.

Just recently, after a discussion Bill and I had, we decided that we would make a specific list of skills, items, goals, etc. that we would introduce to Mara in the next months. Then, after a certain time, we could evaluate the progress. I felt that maybe it would be wise to include Mara in this project. This way she'd have some say in her learning activities since, in the past, when I've come up with what I thought was a great idea or a nifty project, she was at times less than enthusiastic. In fact, I would often meet with resistance or reluctance. When I attempted to talk with her about selecting her own study topics this time, as in the past she withdrew and resisted. She covered her ears and ignored me until I stopped. What does one do in situations like this?

Similarly, I have an incredibly hard time motivating her to do things outside of the house. She loves to stay home and do her own thing. Whether

Math Fun-damentals



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I have in mind a trip to the store or the museum, a bike ride or a walk, she resists (with the exception of the ceramics class). Depending on the circumstances, I sometimes don't push it and other times I just charge ahead. Often I become impatient, angry, and resentful of her behavior in the process of dealing with her. Why, when I think of something exciting or different to do, does she become obstinate or unyielding? Could it be a developmental stage or is it a personality characteristic I'm going to have to learn to deal with?

Typically, Mafa and Clara play daily with any one of their assorted collections, along with their imaginations. They can go on for hours pretending this or that. Usually the theme is personal relating, i.e. getting along with one another while doing some activity like having or giving a birthday party, running a horse race or obstacle course, going on a car trip, re-enactments of real life events or stories read or videos viewed. At other times Mara can immerse herself in drawing and coloring, again for hours, or just recently she's become interested in rubber stamping and ceramics. I do little to get in their way, and often they are on their own as I tend to my work around the house. We read to Mara daily. We go to the library regularly. We are taking the weekly ceramics class and also a gymnastics class. We belong to our homeschool support group, and 4-H and science clubs.

Bill has noticed that Mara learns a lot from observing and listening to others involved in the same process, whether it is science club, gymnastics, or just plain social interaction. He is particularly concerned about her being with Clara all the time, and worries that their kind of repetitious play is not expanding her mind. Also, he doesn't think she sees enough of her friends, even though we meet with our two very good homeschooling friends for informal get togethers as well as going on more formal outings with homeschoolers two or three times a week. Mara seems to enjoy all this. I don't hear her complain about doing too much or not enough (except maybe for not seeing enough of Serena, her good friend). We do plenty of things together as a family, both in and around the city, exposing our children to a wide variety of experiences and people that the city has to offer.

But is she learning anything? Bill would say no. He'd agree that creative, imaginative play is good, to a point, but learning to read, write, and use numbers is more important. I wish Bill would read all that I've read in support of an unschooling approach but, alas, he is not a reader. We have gotten together with a very well-respected and experienced homeschooler in our area, and were able to ask questions and get answers, but still he's skeptical. His discontent is infectious, and now I'm beginning to worry about Mara. Bill insists that I don't really care if Mara learns anything or not, which couldn't be farther from the truth.

Another related concern I have is about the sibling relationship the two girls share. Mara and Clara are the closest siblings I know. They do everything together and love it that way. Sure they have their moments, but on the whole they get along and play very cooperatively with each other. I'm concerned that neither of them, when in the presence of the other, does anything independently; that when we go to a friend's house or a friend comes to ours, the two of them continue their play exclusively and to some extent the friend is an outsider for a given time, usually until I encourage otherwise; that they are too dependent on each other. Often one doesn't do something unless the other wants to. On the whole, Mara is a caring, generous, and loving sister to Clara, and Clara reciprocates. I know this is good but somehow I feel a little uneasy and doubtful and whether too much of a good thing is really OK.

Is there anyone out there who has been here before, who is familiar with these dilemmas? Any suggestions or feedback would be greatly appreciated.

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Watching Children Learn

Working on Reading; Fantasy Play

Gail Sichel (NJ) writes:

I succumbed to pressure from inside myself, in response to aspects of my unenthusiastic environment, and began pushing Corianna to work on her reading more. She was *so* close. Well, she had also told me she wanted to learn to read because she felt uncomfortable when kids younger than she in a music class made a comment about her not reading.

We worked with the Ladybird Series, and that did it. It got her going enough that she was able to read long readers, and her confidence increased. So now she can read if she puts her mind to it, and in September she decided she wanted to participate in the public library's reading contest. Each child in her age group has to read twenty books and write down the title, author, and number of pages. Corianna wanted to do this; I did not care one way or the other, as I'd once more gotten back my equilibrium about pushing the reading and stopped pushing. Well, it is her desire to do this contest, and my desire to help her do what she wants, so this project is going so smoothly. She initiates the reading, though sometimes I'll remind her that she had said she wanted to do it. It is so fantastic when I stay within my own boundaries.

She still is not interested much in reading, though, preferring to work on crafts, stamps, and imaginative play with her younger sister Amarynth and their doll families. There are several soap operas occurring here. Two trolls were interested in each other. They planned a marriage ceremony for days. Art and I were questioned a lot about marriages – who performs them, when, where, what kinds of rituals are involved, etc.

They had the ceremony and life went on. I lost the thread until recently I heard that they decided to split. Corianna had said they were just trying it out, living together, and now she wanted her troll back. Amarynth was not happy with the turn of events. Art and I began to interfere, and discussed divorce, etc. Our interference was not welcomed by either child. I reminded myself that in their games, one of them is always saying, "Let's pretend..." and then the other one adjust the story to, "Well, let's pretend this or that...", and somehow they work it out. I need to remind myself that their solutions often work well for them and have nothing to do with my idea of fairness or proper procedure. I remind myself that when they can't work it out they do come for help.

Amarynth, at 4 1/2, is becoming interested in writing her letters. I'm not sure how much of it comes from Corianna's liking to play school with her and teaching her the letters. I suspect once again the topic is complex, as Corianna is trying to teach her script, which she herself is working on, but Amarynth usually sees print otherwise and when she writes, she prints, though I can recognize some script in her efforts or squiggles.

Corianna is a rough teacher. She teaches lessons, has Amarynth sit at a desk, and for all intents and purposes "does school." I am amazed because we don't do that and never have. But then again, when Corianna used to play birth games, she had hospital births, though hers and Amarynth's were home births! I'm puzzled. A lot of my childbirth videos are home births; a few are hospital. Maybe they play what they are not familiar with, to know it better.

Reveals He Can Read

Carla Stein of Massachusetts writes:

This is our second official year of homeschooling – Kenny and Ricky are 7 1/2 and 6. Up until a year ago, neither boy was reading or, for that matter, showing an interest in it, though they have always enjoyed being read to by the hour. They have been busy excelling in other areas, and I've (mostly) felt fine about leaving them alone about reading and letting them immerse themselves in other interests.

Needless to say, we've heard plenty of helpful opinions and advice from friends and family members whose children are currently being taught to read in the first grade. Outside, I'd be all confidence, calmly quoting Frank Smith's *Reading Without Nonsense*, but inwardly I wavered with doubts and squirmed under the spotlight's glare.

When Ricky turned 6, he started showing an interest in learning to read, so whenever he wanted to, we'd sit down with whatever "Easy Reader" he chose. He would laboriously read it aloud to me, with frequent help, occasional frustration fits, and increasing delight. This, of course, assuaged some of the discomfort I felt about our non-readers, but I was still concerned about Kenny. He would occasionally hang around while Ricky was reading, but he always turned me down when I offered him the same opportunity. I knew he could read some very basic stuff – a label here and there – but would he ever really read without my forcing the issue?

Yes! One morning we were working on a science project, building a "secret" electromagnetic drawer lock for his desk. He needed to know how to start the project. I was busy with some dishes, so I told him to look at the directions himself. He proceeded to read to me, almost effortlessly, a 100-word paragraph which contained words like "solenoid," "nonmagnetic," "aluminum," "rectangle," "lengthwise," "downward," and "workable." The only

help he needed was for me to cover the longer words and then reveal them one syllable at a time, and usually he had them figured out before he saw the last syllable. Once in a while, when he hit a troublesome word, I'd read back to him the sentence he just read, and he would almost immediately correct his skewed pronunciation with no other prompting.

Hurrah! Frank Smith was really right after all. You don't have to ram the alphabet down your child's throat. He will learn to read (or let you in on the fact that he can) when he's ready to. Keep the faith!

How *Not* Writing Helped His Writing

[SS:] Morgan Vitale (VA), one of the homeschoolers who works with me on writing, wrote about how his interest in writing developed:

I guess it all started on my fourth birthday when my mom had a storyteller come and tell a few stories. I loved it and really got hooked. After that I told my mom a lot of stories, which she jotted down. Then my great-uncle David sent us a box of his old boyhood junk. In that box I found my first issue of a Batman comic book. I later collected all the Batman issues I could. I would have mom read them to me until I finally got tired of her stopping in the middle. That motivated me to learn to read. Now I have 220 different comic books.

Shortly after I got my Batman collection up to 20, I began to need more physical action. So I began to pretend that I was Batman solving cases. This is how I began to create different scenarios in my head. I even wrestled with my dog a couple of times, pretending he was Two Face or the Joker.

I then started my storytelling again, which I had stopped when I began reading Batman. I started with Batman stories, but then I got the idea of creating my own superhero. He was my imaginary crime fighter, Super Blue! I told my stories about Super Blue to mom and she typed them all up on the computer. After I stopped telling Super Blue stories I began to make up many more superheroes, even though I never wrote about them. I formed a committee with my friends and we would pretend we were the heroes themselves.

When I turned 12, I began to – well, not really tire of my games, but not be able to play them. I would usually just sit down and watch the game happen in my head. Then I wrote my first story in a long, long time. It was a two-page romance novel. It really got me into writing. I then took all the plotting ability that I had formed reading comics and playing superheroes, and I used it for my stories.

[SS:] When I read Morgan's story, I was struck by how amazing hindsight is: looking back, Morgan can see (and we can see with him) how all the things he was involved in during those years ended up contributing to his writing. In an important sense, Morgan *was* writing all along, even when he was not actually writing stories on paper. It's easy and delightful to recognize this now, but I couldn't help thinking, as I read Morgan's letter, that it's very hard to cope with this sort of thing *at the time*. I can easily imagine getting a call from a mother of the child Morgan must have been at 7 or 8. "My son used to love to dictate stories all the time," this mother would say. "Now he's stopped writing, and all he wants to do is act out superheroes with his friends." We know *now*, from the 12-year-old Morgan, that he never really stopped writing, that playing those superhero games was part of growing as a writer (and as a child) and was the form that his interest in plots and characters took during those years. But I wouldn't have been able to reassure Morgan's mother about this at the time, because I wouldn't have known for sure that Morgan would start writing again. I would only have been able to offer the general principle that the things Morgan chose to do were no doubt important to him and therefore worthwhile.

Morgan's story makes me think of others like it that we've had in GWS over the years: Pam Gingold's account of how her son Jeremiah was interested in sounding out letters for a while, then lost interest in that and became consumed by the project of putting together a complicated puzzle, and then, at the end of that time, turned back to reading with increased skill and confidence. Or Nancy Wallace's story about how her son Ishmael realized, only many years later, that his early fascination with block structures paved the way for his interest in musical composition. In hindsight these stories show us that we can't always see what's happening when we're right in it. Years later, we look back and say, "It was all part of the same thing. All those things he did were really varying forms of the same interest." But at the time this isn't always clear, so it can look as if a child has stopped writing or reading or whatever it may be. And so parents worry. It's hard not to. If Morgan's mother had had to tell skeptical relatives or school officials what Morgan was doing in the way of writing during some of the years when he wasn't *apparently* writing at all, she would have had a hard time.

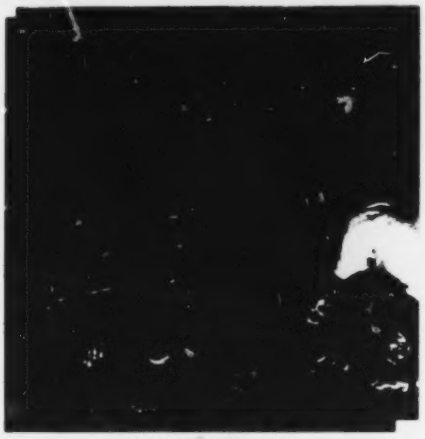
But think of the alternative. If she had tried to get Morgan to write stories during the time when he was busy playing those pretend games, I suspect he would have subtly or overtly resisted her, maybe not even fully knowing why. Some part of him would have known that playing those games was what he needed to do at that time, and that part would have resisted being distracted or derailed. And perhaps worse, some part of him would have sensed that the activities *he* felt were important and necessary and interesting weren't what adults valued or expected of him.

Instead, the superhero-playing 7 year old has grown into a 12 year old who trusts his own abilities and perceptions, is used to having his activities taken seriously, reflects on his own development with pride, and is, by the way, also a skillful writer.

Homeschoolers' Chess Club

Louise Williams (NM) writes:

After reading the stories in GWS #97 about homeschool sports teams, I wanted to tell you about how I started a homeschoolers' chess club. We currently have 28 homeschooled kids coming to our chess club every week. We have competed very successfully in



The homeschoolers' chess club at practice

team meets in our area and at state scholastic tournaments.

My son Evan, who is now 11, learned chess when he was about 4 from his father. When Evan matured to the point that he could handle losing without falling apart (about age 7), we started thinking that it would be nice if he could play chess at the neighborhood elementary school. The school district officials said that homeschoolers were not allowed to participate in any school activities or events. I asked, "What about extra-curricular things, like chess club?" The lady repeated her first statement, a flat no. Then the superintendent broke in and said that on the elementary level, chess club was actually a parent-sponsored activity and not a school-sponsored activity, a distinction that had never occurred to me.

So we decided we would not pursue it through the schools at all, but through the parents. I recommend this back-door approach when dealing with schools that seem unfriendly. There may be many activities that although held at the school are not "school-sponsored." Through some asking around we found out the name of the parent who was the chess coach at our neighborhood elementary school. When we called him, he told us that he and some of the kids were going to be meeting through the summer at the public library and that we were welcome to join them.

The coach was very encouraging to Evan. By the time chess club was ready to start for real in the school in the fall, we knew the coach and a few of the kids. Chess club met twice a week, and the coach told us exactly where to go so we wouldn't have to ask anyone directions. We just walked in as if we belonged there. I stayed to help, figuring that that would make Evan more comfortable in such a strange and hectic place. By the time the league's team meets started in October, Evan was the third best in the club, so he was invited to play on the school team against other schools in the league. Next the coach encouraged him to enter the state championships, which were individual events rather than team events like the meets. He did very well, and I made sure that all of his successes were reported in our local homeschoolers' newsletter.

After Evan had been playing in the school chess club for a couple of years, a friend of mine who was compiling a list of homeschool clubs listed "chess club" with my name and phone number as a joke. But then when I got many calls, I decided that it was a good idea, since by that time we were dissatisfied with the chess club at school (there was a different coach that year who just let the kids play their friends instead of trying to pair them by ability, and Evan had trouble finding people who would play him.)

By the end of the September I had 18 kids coming to my house each week for chess club. By the end of October they all knew how to play fairly well, and we entered two teams into the league competition. The kids all loved it. Many of them went on to play in the state championships that spring, and we took home more than our share of the trophies.

When 28 kids signed up for chess club this year, I decided I needed help. One mother volunteered to have it at her house since she was more centrally located, another volunteered to be treasurer, another to do telephoning, another to do publicity, etc. I'm still the coordinator and coach, but I'm now a firm believer in asking others for help.

As the coach, I teach a short chess lesson to the group each week. I get most of my material from back issues of *School Mates*, a chess magazine published for kids by the U.S. Chess Federation. After the lesson, they play each other in "ladder" games. A chess ladder is a way of ranking the kids for pairing purposes.

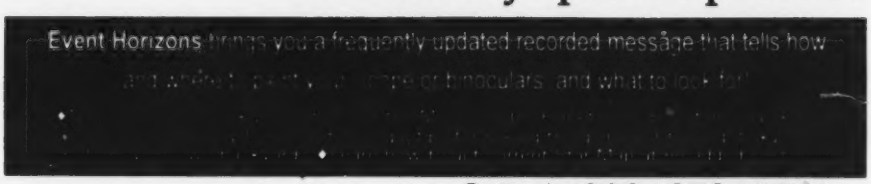
It has been a very successful year. Both kids and parents have been very enthusiastic. We had two teams in the elementary division of the league and another team in the junior high division. We have also played informal matches against the local middle and high schools.

As a way to earn a little money, Evan has started giving private chess lessons to a few of the younger kids in the club, charging them a dollar an hour. I have been very impressed with how much work and sensitivity he has put into these lessons. It has been a new and valuable learning experience for him.

Chess club has been a good social outlet for all the kids. I have been pleased with how well the kids of different ages get along; from 6 to 14, they're all equals across a chess board.

Because of the phenomenal success that the kids in our club have had in competition with school kids, we have gotten a lot of positive free publicity for homeschooling. We call ourselves "The Home Team," and our

The kids love the 'Scope you got 'em . . .
but can they spot the planets?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kids proudly wear their team t-shirts to all the meets and tournaments. After each state tournament, when we write up the results for the local newspaper, we mention what school each of the kids is from. People are starting to notice that frequently half the kids who place high enough to get trophies are homeschooled. Many people still connect chess in their minds with being smart, and now we're helping them connect chess with homeschooling. Actually, you don't have to be smart to play chess; many slow or so-called learning disabled kids do quite well at chess. And of course many physically disabled kids find it the perfect sport for them.

So how can your kids get involved? Volunteers in schools are rarely turned away. Some cities have chess clubs at the YMCA or at a Boys and Girls Club. And of course starting your own homeschool chess club is quite rewarding. Kids in very remote areas can play postal chess or play over a modem on their computers. Kids can join the U.S. Chess Federation for $7 a year which includes a subscription to *School Mates*, or $15 a year if they'd rather have a subscription to *Chess Life*. To join call 1-800-388-5464. If you ask, they will also send you some free pamphlets about rules of chess and how to coach a chess club.

Many kids prefer to play in scholastic tournaments to start with, but they are also eligible to play in adult tournaments. Our son has enjoyed interacting with adults as equals over the chess board. None of the adults he has met this way have been patronizing; they're too worried about whether he is going to beat them.

Frustrations in Learning

Candra Kennedy (KY) writes:

I am 9 years old. I have never been to school. Sometimes I get really frustrated when I'm learning something new in violin, piano, and math. When I'm frustrated I feel like there are many different people inside me. They are in three different groups: the bad-'uns who say "give up, quit, run away," the good-'uns who say, "Go on, you can do it, try again," and the sillies who confuse me by saying, "Do what the bad-'uns say; no do what the good-'uns say," and on and on. Unfortunately, I usually choose the bad-'uns.

Yesterday I wanted to play a new piece called Carnival on the piano. At first I couldn't. Then I said the dreaded "C" word, "Can't." Then I cried and got all emotional. My mom doesn't know what to do when I get like this. She tries different things, none of which help. First she says, "Cut it out" or "Stop it!", and she always says, "If you get all upset, you'll never do it." That is true but it doesn't help me. Sometimes she gets mad and loses her temper. Yesterday she took my piano book away from me! That just made me madder. So I ran away to our forest. I thought, "I will live here forever." But then the peacefulness of the forest crept into me and I thought of all the things I'd miss if I lived there forever. I loved my mom and dad and my 6-year-old brother Calen, so I went back home and now I'm playing Carnival perfectly! I think the answer to my frustration is to find my own solution. I'm still not sure what my mom can do to help me except try to make a quiet atmosphere.

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Focus

Competition and Cooperation

Cooperation Shouldn't Be Overshadowed

From Dillon Wright-Fitzgerald (PA):

In competition there is something to work for (trophy, prize, or just the satisfaction and pride of knowing you won), and I've heard many kids say that they don't like cooperative games or activities because there is no trophy to work for, no individual winner. Everyone wins. But of course there's something to work for! Everyone has to work together so that the game may be won or the project completed.

I haven't done a tremendous amount of competing, but I don't think that has disadvantaged me. And I don't think that homeschoolers are missing out on something essential if they miss out on school competition. One good experience I had with competition was when I entered a writing contest in *Cricket* magazine and received an honorable mention. The story had been so short that I hadn't been able to develop characters or plot very well. I was pleasantly surprised with the success, and even though all I got was my name in the magazine and a certificate, it was, to me, an achievement, and I felt good about it.

But other times I don't like competing. I've never enjoyed competitive team sports, mostly because I can't play them very well and I've never had the interest to learn. When I'm playing competitively, a lot of pressure is put on me. If I make mistakes or don't do well, I feel as though I'm making a fool of myself, and I get discouraged. To get out of those situations, I usually watch instead. But if it's all in fun, and no one really cares who wins, sometimes I'm tempted to play.

When I play smaller-scale sports, such as table tennis or badminton, I hate keeping score. I'd rather just volley. Instead of hitting the ball or birdie so the other partner misses it, we both try to see how many times we can hit it back and forth, which forces us to work cooperatively.

At a 4-H summer camp that I went to, I remember having competitive relay races almost every day. There were four teams of maybe twenty kids each. The races were fun, but a lot of the kids got mad when their team didn't win, and I heard familiar comments about the successful team: "They probably just cheated!", "I don't think they had as many people as we did," or about kids on their own team: "It was Katie's fault; she fell," "Mike slowed us down." Although after a while they laughed and were pretty good sports about it, when *I* tripped or didn't run fast enough, I imagined them rolling their eyes and talking about *me*. That's the danger of competition. It can breed rivalry and even hate.

I had an opposite experience at a teen retreat at our Quaker Meeting. One game we did was a cooperative one where the only thing you had to beat was the clock. As we worked together, helping each other while doing our best, we were able to get a pretty fast time. And no one was resentful, since we had all won.

When I lived in Baltimore, I took Irish step dancing lessons with a group of friendly kids and a wonderfully positive teacher. My best friend in the class and I would practice our steps together and give each other feedback on them. It was great to be able to work together. When I moved to Pennsylvania in 1991, the class was starting to compete in festivals and dance contests. Although I would have loved to keep dancing with the rest of the class, and competing *might* have been fun, I know I would have hated the pressure, and it might have taken some of the joy out of dancing. I love to dance, and perform, but I do it for my own personal enjoyment, and I wouldn't want to be labeled as best, which might lead me to think that I really was the best, or worst, which might hurt my confidence and suggest that I really was the worst.

It's my opinion that cooperation should never be overshadowed by competition. If competitors are not pressured but are encouraged to do their best, and if everyone is a good sport, competition can be a rewarding experience. But I think that cooperation is much more important. I don't believe that competition is an essential part of childhood, or of life in general, and I think that too much of it isn't good for kids. It can hurt your ego and self-respect. Cooperation, however, should definitely be a big part of everyone's childhood. If by the time you're an adult you don't know how to cooperate, you'll have a hard time relating to co-workers, peers, and even friends and family. A lot of times it's hard to get a group of people to

cooperate, but once everyone is working together, the results are usually good. In competition, you're working together with your group, or by yourself, against an opponent. In cooperation, there is no opponent. You're working together with *everyone*. There are no rivals, no bad guys, *no sides*. Isn't that what it's all about?

Competes Against Her Own Scores

From Carla O'Connell of Maryland:

I'm a Level 6, United States Gymnastics Federation gymnast on a competitive team, so I compete a lot. I enjoy competing. It's like showing everyone how well I can do what I do. I don't think of competing against the other kids. I like to compete against my own scores, and if I do well in placing, that's a bonus.

I think that competitive events are more important for some people than for others. I've found that I like competing. When I am at a meet, my main goals are to beat my best and to do better than before. If I win it's a bonus, but I try even harder to get better each time. If I do well for my personal best but don't place, I still am happy and I keep working. When I don't do as well as I expect I am initially discouraged, but then I work harder and keep trying.

I have opportunities to work cooperatively also. I'm in a 4-H group, made up of all homeschoolers, and we have committees and work together on projects. I also act in plays and we have to work cooperatively then. In my family we have to cooperate, too. My siblings and I help each other with cleaning up, with schoolwork, with projects – there's a spirit of cooperation around here, most of the time anyway.

For me, competition and cooperation are both important in their own ways. Being competitive gives me a chance to shine and show what I can do myself. Cooperating has a different atmosphere. Cooperating should be very important for everybody, I think. I like working with a group of people toward one objective.

Some activities I approach either more cooperatively or more competitively depending on who I'm with. For example, when playing a game with my brother, I am more likely to play competitively and to feel mad when I lose, but I still enjoy playing games with him. With my friend Rebecca, we probably play the game more as a way of being together. Having fun is more important than the game itself. With another friend, the goal is to win. But whether or not I win or lose, I am still doing it for the fun of it.

Both Are Necessary

From Josh White of Ohio:

I've played many a competitive sport, all the way from the organized level to the pick-up game. I've experienced every feeling possible in the competitive sports realm, from being cut from an all-star team to pitching the final out in a pony league championship.

In sports, there is no such thing (except for very rare exceptions) as absolute winning or losing. When I play, I play not to win but to improve upon what I have done before. As long as I keep this perspective, sports don't affect me negatively. Competition drives one to succeed, excel, and perform beyond their previous limits. However great sports are, though, they can get overdone, and it's never a good idea, unless you are of exceptional moral fiber, to go in too deep over your head in competition. Continue to compete at your own level, against yourself, until you can step up to the next level. I believe competition is an essential and undeniable ingredient in the making of a well-rounded youth, as long as you remember that you are competing against yourself.

I've also had the opportunity to work together with others. Cooperation gives people the opportunity to adapt their skills to better the success of the whole. I work with other bright young individuals on two newsletters I edited. The first, my church's youth group newsletter, was loads of fun. There was no competition among peer writers scrambling to secure a spot on an exclusive staff, mainly because the newsletter was open to all, and therefore we had a lot of fun with it. The weekly newsletter meetings would consist of 90% reading magazines, talking, and fiddling with the computer, and 10% actual newsletter work. This worked out for me because that is where I learned to use computers.

My other newsletter experience consisted of editing a baseball cards newsletter. This was more of a challenge, but a cooperative one. I assembled a staff of talented writers and illustrators and we worked together to produce a professional-style magazine (sans slick pages, though). It was great fun to watch everyone grow in talent and ability as we all worked toward a unified goal. (This newsletter, by the way, is distributed for just the cost of postage, and I still need talented sports enthusiasts to help out.)

I think homeschooling is great because it allows the child to choose between competition and cooperation. I think school (the institution) is wrong in coercing chil-

dren, not in any way prepared emotionally to compete with each other, to be labeled with grade levels, marks, and mental ability tags. Homeschooling allows children to choose to compete if and when they are ready to, and to choose the level of competition. Homeschooling also provides a ready environment for cooperation, while institutionalized school doesn't.

After participating in a competitive event, such as a pick-up basketball game, I give myself an evaluation. I go through my improvements and my failures and address each one. Next time I hit the court I try and eliminate the faults and enhance the successes. Now, I do have something against ultra-competitive sports or events such as Olympic-level gymnastics. These poor kids are driven past their breaking point by trainers and parents from a ridiculously early age. On the other hand, with a pick-up basketball game, you choose your level of competition – if you are consistently thrashed at one court, you can always move on to some other playground where the competition isn't so stiff. One must learn to deal with discouragement sometime in life. Sports is an ideal way to do it, but pressed too early, a child can be broken by failure. It's important to stress personal goals (reachable ones, at that) and work toward them at a steady pace.

Each pursuit, competitive or cooperative, has its own benefits. What you can get out of competition, you can't get out of cooperation, and vice-versa. Each are necessary ingredients in a scholar's diet.

Seeing How She Compared

From Sarah Jamieson of Wisconsin:

I think competition and cooperation are both important. It seems that sometimes competing encourages me to work harder, but it also involves more pressure, and of course it's hard to lose. Usually when I lose in a competition I'm quite discouraged and keep thinking about why I lost, but of course when I win I feel great. I haven't had a lot of experience with competition, but I think I have plenty of opportunities to compete and I don't think homeschoolers miss out on those opportunities. There's an ice rink near us and our homeschooling group gets together and plays hockey. We do play to win, but it's not overly competitive, it's just friendly.

Recently I entered a writing contest. I had to write an essay about how the environment affects my family. I don't know whether I won yet. I admit that I entered because I was interested to see how I would compare to the school kids. I was just curious to know. I don't think I worked any harder on that essay than I worked on this one or on other things that I write without a competitive element, though. I don't think contests are bad, but I don't think parents need to encourage their children to enter contests just for the sake of it, either. If their kids are content not to enter, that's fine too.

In general, I don't think it's bad or harmful to compete, but I do think that competition can be negative if you place a lot of emphasis on winning all the time. If you can accept that you will lose sometimes, it's much better.

I don't usually play intentionally cooperative games, partly because I view almost everything as a cooperative effort in one way or another. Some of my homeschooling friends and I have been taking an art class recently, and we work on paintings together. We have to be careful not to hurt each other's feelings, so I think we're learning cooperation that way. I'm interested in theatre, too, and I think plays are a cooperative experience. People can try to compete in acting, or steal scenes from each other, but really it's best to think about the play as a whole.

Feeling Included, Important, Successful

From Meredith Conroy (PA):

Adrenaline takes over your body as you sit waiting your turn. The coach takes long enough to call you up, but finally you're given the standard lecture, pat on the back, and a "Go get 'em!". You perform harder than you ever imagined you could – and you win! The crowd is so loud that you can't hear your teammates screaming congratulations in your ear.

As a former competitive gymnast and former homeschooler, I have mixed feelings about competitions. The longest-lasting of my competitive experiences was gymnastics. Starting at age 5, I worked at being a gymnast until I quit at age 12. I was part of a close team of about ten girls aged 10-15. We practiced four days a week, three hours a day, and traveled to meets on weekends. Together we ached, laughed, sweat, made fun of the coach, and grew as people and as gymnasts. But when we went out to compete, we mounted the apparatus individually. There was no passing a ball back and forth or making up lost time for somebody else. It wasn't like the average team sport where eight or ten kids are out on a field at one time. In gymnastics, you're on your own. That can be a ton of pressure or a huge relief, depending on who you are. I always liked the idea that I could let only myself down, not a whole team.

I've also been in numerous writing contests and a regional Math-Counts contest that I entered through school this year. On a lower level, I've played kickball, softball, and soccer games with my family and/or a few friends. When Dad is home, we play what Mom calls "Killer _____" (fill in the name of our current favorite board game). If you play with us, don't expect any mercy! Being the oldest child of three, I usually win.

Through these experiences and others, I've had my share of winning, losing, and finishing in between. It's always been my choice to compete and I think that's really important. I've felt good about going out and doing my stuff, whether it's a big gymnastics meet or a board game with my sister. If someone told me, "You don't have a choice about entering this," then the personal challenge wouldn't be there. Competing would no longer be an educational, fun experience.

I can't remember that either winning or losing ever made me want to quit doing that activity. A fall from the balance beam would just make me determined to "nail it"

(gymnastics lingo) the next time. If I lost a board game I would remember that that particular strategy didn't work. Winning a poetry contest didn't affect my love of writing poetry. If I won a blue ribbon for the gymnastics floor exercise I was happy, but when I went back to the gym I worked on a new twist or flip to include in the next competition. The only way I'll participate is if I love to do it. And if I really love it, then ribbons and medals aren't important.

For me, the benefits of competition are: showing off for an audience (even if the audience consists only of my one opponent), having an opportunity to form a strong team bond, and as much as I don't want to admit it, I like beating other people most of the time. But I know not everyone feels this way. At times I like learning new skills, practicing old ones, or just fooling around in a pressure-free environment. Even if I never use those skills in competition, or ever again, it's good to be able to experiment with my abilities without someone watching and judging my every move. Some people consider this kind of learning more important than competition. I can relate to that. Proving to myself that I can master something new can mean more to me than proving it to someone else, depending on the situation.

If a child, or for that matter an adult, feels uncomfortable or self-conscious participating in a competition, then he or she shouldn't do it. I've found that it can be just as much fun working toward a positive goal, rather than putting every effort into beating the other participants. Competing isn't important. What's important is the feeling you get when a team (any kind of team) includes you and you work really hard to accomplish your goal, together.

Projects such as raising money to donate to a homeless shelter or an environmental organization, picking up trash along the road, or working behind the scenes in a play are positive, fun, and especially good for those who want to stay out of the spotlight. "Show-offs" can put on a play, perform a routine of some kind, or give a concert. These noncompetitive group activities help other people besides yourself. Sports and competitions, on the other hand, are often enjoyable only to the people who are involved.

Everyone needs that chance to feel and to be included, important, and successful. Not everyone needs competition.

Music Competitions; Science Class

From Andrea Quarracino (PA):

I don't believe that being competitive has anything to do with whether you are a homeschooled person or not. I think it has to do with the type of person you are to begin with. I have always been on the noncompetitive side myself, and I tend to get very nervous in competitive situations. But as a homeschooler, I think I get as many opportunities to compete as someone going to school would.

I compete with other kids through several of my interests, one of which is music. I have been playing violin for about five years now, and in the past year I have

Andrea Quarracino preparing for a violin competition.

auditioned for various orchestras and music camps, both of which involved a *lot* of competition.

My experiences with competition have been positive, so far. Most of the people I have competed with have been nice about the situation, wishing luck and things like that, even though we both know that, chances are, only one of us will be accepted. But I have encountered some people who are competitive down to the bone. They are the ones who absolutely cannot resist a parting remark that will, they hope, bring down your confidence level. Although the latter situation is hard to work in, I can honestly say that I think I do pretty well in competitive situations for a noncompetitive person.

Aside from competing through musical auditions, I also enter contests that involve writing stories or poems to win possible publication. Competing through the mail, rather than face-to-face, is easier for me. I don't have to worry about the kind of impression people will form of me, because they are reading neatly typed words on a sheet of paper and not facing a very nervous teenage girl.

I think many of my efforts at competing have been positive because I keep confidence in my abilities even while I am being nervous. And competing is good, too, because I often find that after I work hard to win a contest or an audition, I want to win again, and it inspires me to work harder and attain that goal. Winning is a habit that is hard to break. If I lost, I know I would be disappointed for a while, but losing would also make me work harder to try my luck at winning again.

As for cooperation, one way that I cooperate with other people is through my homeschooling group. The group consists of nine of my homeschooling friends and my siblings, and we all work together on different projects when we meet. Our current project is to publish a bi-monthly homeschoolers' newsletter. Everyone works together to make this possible. Even though it does take a lot of work, cooperating with each other makes it easier.

I also cooperate with friends in a Science Lab class. The class consists of six homeschoolers: my friends Emily, Julia, and Nicholas, my siblings Lara and Peter, and myself. Rather than work by ourselves, we decided to pair off and study together to learn from each other. I think we all benefit from that decision. Emily and I work together as a team, which really helps when we are trying to complete complicated experiments. For instance, bringing calcium

chloride and water to a boil while taking the temperature reading would be very hard for one person to do. Cooperating as a team is also easier because if Rick (our teacher) asks us a question about a subject we don't know a lot about, we can figure out the answer together instead of one of us saying "What?" and pretending to misunderstand the question while frantically working it out on our own.

Competition and cooperation are both valuable to me. In competition, I can see my work judged through the eyes of other people. It's harder, because it involves a project that I work on by myself. In cooperation, people work together to make a goal possible. It is a team effort, and because everyone is working together, it is easier.

Competitive Games, Cooperative Activities

From Rikki Scandora (WA):

I like both kinds of activities. I like to do competitive ones, especially badminton and backgammon, with my dad. He's more of a challenge. My younger friends aren't interested or aren't very good at these games or other competing ones. And my older sister won't play them with me because we like different games. My younger brother will, but it's more fun with someone who's better. But I play these games because they're fun, not just to win. I even play by myself. Losing just makes me want to play more.

I enter coloring contests, because they're fun, too. I like doing art. This fall I won four of the contests I entered. That was great because I got prizes and money.

I wouldn't want to do competitive sports on a team because then playing wouldn't be fun.

I do mostly cooperative things with my friends. They're younger than I am. We do art projects together or play horses. We play tag or sardines which is fun. No one really loses because everyone gets a chance to be "it."

We're Trained to Be Competitive

From Lucas Hollister (PA):

I believe that some competition is good and helps give you motivation to practice. Last year I was the best person on my soccer team. In between seasons, I didn't practice much because I was already so good and we won so often. This year I was on a team with older and better players and I was out of practice. The competition of that team, along with the personal satisfaction of being a better soccer player, made me practice more. At the same time, too much competition, or losing a lot of games, pressures a player and results in a lack of practicing and giving up.

If we weren't trained to be competitive and the world had no competition, then human beings would be more cooperative with each other in all ways. There would be no sports or divided countries. If people could cooperate, they would work out disagreements, which would result in no wars. We'd have no crime and no oppression. For instance, in the oppression of young people, competition is one of the main things that keeps young people from being close to each other.

It would be tough to switch our world from competition to cooperation because we're so trained to be motivated by competition. The adjustment would be difficult for people to take.

Never Liked Competing

From Jackie Dolamore of Florida:

I don't compete with other kids very often, but I never liked it. I remember once I got so upset when my sister won at the board game LIFE, I cried. I feel silly about it now. My favorite games are games you play with yourself – card games, video games, and the like.

These days, losing doesn't affect me as much. I've learned to tolerate it and not give up, but cooperation has always seemed like the better alternative. I've never liked sports, partly because of sweat and physical activity, which I hate, but also because I don't like to lose but always did lose in sports. I'll soon be taking karate, though.

We have some cooperative games and those are nice to play because I never have a sense of loss. Animal Town Game Co. carries some nice cooperative games and we have bought several of them.

I have worked on a project with others, in a fifth grade gifted class at school. We had to build a space or sea colony and design it and figure out the details and stuff. I hated that, too. I hate space, and everyone fought with each other. One girl hated all my ideas and everyone else hated them too. I, to this day, think the others weren't as logical as I was in designing the darn thing.

I believe I probably *should* do cooperative and competitive activities, but I would personally just like my eyes and mind to cooperate by reading a book or my mind to compete with itself in Super Nintendo.

Cooperating Makes a Better Team

From Trevor Killory-Andersen (MA):

I have played on a soccer team for six years and am in my first year on a YMCA basketball team. In soccer I liked to play and it didn't matter whether we won or lost. That's partly because we usually won, and the year before last we actually won the championship. I'm not sure I want to keep up with basketball because we always lose by at least forty points.

This year soccer felt harder than in most other years. I wasn't quite as good as the other kids and I felt more pressured than in the other years that I played. I didn't have as much fun. The coach this year seemed to go for competition more than cooperation and we didn't do so well. When my dad coached the team, we were always one of the best teams in the league and we went for cooperation more than anything else. Perhaps if you go for cooperation you get a better team.

Letter to a Superintendent

Sarah Clough began homeschooling this past fall, just after she had entered tenth grade. After she had been out of school for several months, she wrote this letter to her local school superintendent:

Mr. D.:

My name is Sarah Clough. Several months ago I dropped off some information regarding my withdrawal from Newburyport High School and my enrollment with Clonlara [Home Based Education Program]. Since then I have heard nothing from the Newburyport School System. It absolutely amazes me that nobody would question me on my leaving or my reasons for doing so, or even make sure that I was going to be receiving an education after leaving. Newburyport High School is developing quite a negative reputation, not only from me, but amongst many other students and their parents.

The only involvement I have had with this school has been motivated by my mother and me. One [occasion] was with the principal to discuss my frustrations with the school and how I felt about my needs not being met there. Another was with the department Chairs to discuss other options I may have to get an education without having to be in the building where my education was not possible. At that meeting I was only met with an incredible amount of negativity and rudeness. After these meetings I heard nothing, no response. Once again it was me taking the initiative, which isn't necessarily bad, but why such a passive approach from the school? Once again I met with the principal, this time to let her know I was leaving and my reasons why. Since then I have heard nothing back regarding my progress or if I should need any assistance.

I write this letter on behalf of the students who aren't self-motivated, who don't have the push they need to keep at their education. It took my leaving Newburyport High School to be truly free to receive an education not surrounded by violence and tolerance [of that violence]. I cannot count the number of times I have been down to the office to discuss the violence and bullying in your school, and not once has any step been made to prevent [the violence]. The only thing I have heard of being done was from Mr. L. [the vice-principal] when he told me and showed me some restraining orders. I think that is totally unacceptable. I apparently had been coming down to the office too often because one of the times I went down I was received by Mr. L. with the statement, "What is it this time?" I was completely humiliated and overwhelmed with this. Maybe if something was done about my complaints I wouldn't have been down there so often – not that that should be the issue; it's his job. The only thing this school wants to hear about is the Newburyport High School spirit. What ever happened to education and safety? I also cannot count the number of times I have seen people fight in your school. I just don't understand where you are coming from. I think something seriously needs to be done, something more than an assembly or a restraining order. I think the first step would be to get involved, listen, care about what the person is saying and then do something about it!

In case anybody was wondering how I am doing, I am doing great! I am excelling academically and emotionally. I wouldn't have it any other way.

Sincerely,
Sarah Clough

Sarah sent GWS a copy of her letter and added:

My problems at school started when I was in seventh grade. A girl didn't like me and she started saying things to me and following me around and writing things about me on the walls. I kept going to the principal, and we had a couple of meetings with the principal, the vice-principal, and the girl who was doing these things, and they just threatened to use the restraining orders, as I wrote in the letter, but they never did and they never checked back with me to see if I was OK.

By the time I was in tenth grade, there was still a lot of bullying and fighting going on at the school, and finally I couldn't stand it anymore. I said to myself, "Forget it, no one's going to do anything about this and I can't learn anymore." When I sat in class I would be terrified that someone was waiting outside the door to say something to me or bully me, and I couldn't concentrate that way.

I had heard about homeschooling somehow, and in the past my mother and I had talked about the idea. In tenth grade, when I was fed up with school, the idea of homeschooling came to me again. At first I met with the school officials and asked if I could homeschool using their curriculum, because at that time I didn't know I could do it on my own. They were really negative about that. Then I talked to some people who knew about homeschooling, and they told us about Clonlara, so I decided to do that.

I wrote the letter to the superintendent a few months later, and I sent a copy to the principal and someone on the school board. For a while I got no response. My mother has a friend who works for another school system, and when my mother mentioned to her that I had written this letter and

continued on page 36

It Never Ends: The Problem of Mandatory Continuing Education

An interview with John Ohliger

For over 20 years, John Ohliger has made opposition to mandatory continuing education his personal crusade. Not long ago he told us that he thought GWS ought to pay more attention to this issue because it has such direct relevance to our work. The children who are now learning outside of school might find themselves in schools as adults because of how widespread MCE has become, Ohliger warned us. In the following interview he explores these issues.

What kinds of adult education courses are mandatory?

It's everything from professionals being required to take courses to keep up their licenses to mothers on welfare being required to take courses to keep getting their checks.

In the medical profession, though there has been some opposition at times by the American Medical Association, physicians are required to take a certain number of continuing education courses in order to keep their malpractice insurance down. More and more professions – alphabetically from accountants and attorneys to teachers and veterinarians – are similarly encumbered. At the same time, more and more people outside the standard professions have to go back to school to remedy some so-called social defect such as illiteracy or violating traffic laws.

Professors in the academic field of adult education usually fail to understand that these activities are fundamentally the same – forced adult education, with all the disadvantages that follow when you make people do something they haven't participated freely in the decision about. Today, over half the American adult population is forced to go back to school.

What's the reason for it?

The stated rationale has to do with the so-called "knowledge explosion," which is the idea that there's so much more knowledge coming out every year that people simply have to absorb in order to keep doing what they're doing. This idea completely separates competence from morality by focusing totally on the technical aspects of knowledge. Also, the idea is that most if not all of this new knowledge is good.

Even assuming that there is some value to people keeping up with what's new in their professions, why do you think people feel the need to make that mandatory? Wouldn't people have an interest in keeping up, anyway?

I think experience has shown that people don't readily come to these classes on their own, or not enough to justify offering them on a voluntary basis. So the idea is that therefore the classes have to be mandatory in order to insure that people are keeping up with the necessary knowledge. Here's an example: a few years ago in Wisconsin, pharmacists were being told that they had to keep up with all the new drugs, and they felt they had two choices: they could require that pharmacists take an examination every few years to maintain their licenses, or they could let the pharmacists take courses instead. Well, which is more threatening? Naturally, when those are the choices, people prefer courses.

Does mandatory continuing education work in the sense that people actually learn what they are supposed to learn? After all, some people have observed that compulsory education doesn't always work for kids because many of them don't learn what they're expected to.

I don't know of anybody who says that mandatory continuing education works well enough. Of course some of it does work, but we're talking about a massive investment of funds, and it's very difficult to test the effectiveness of the effort. Some people have tried to test it, but as with the testing of children, it's not always clear that people are actually testing what they set out to test.

There's also a fair amount of sabotage. For example, Tom Brokaw did his NBC television show "Exposé" (March 17, 1991) about doctors at a ski resort who were supposed to be watching an instructional movie, as part of a course. Instead, the movie was playing to nobody and the doctors were out on the slopes. Evading requirements or fudging them goes on all the time. I used to think this kind of sabotage was bad. But now I see that it may be helping us to get to the point where we recognize the absurdity of most mandatory continuing education.

Nowadays the phrase "lifelong learning" usually refers to continuing education, often of the sort you're talking about. Is there any sort of lifelong learning that you do advocate or support? Or, to put it another way, what options do people have besides taking courses?

Of course it's worthwhile to learn to do something well, as an adult, when you're in a situation that you're embracing. A man I know moved with his family to a farm, and had no previous experience with farming. He had to learn a great deal – that was lifelong learning. But that's so different from these artificial mandates, which are based on the idea that people can't learn by doing, or on the job. A medical technician once said to me, "We learn all the time how to do things better. We're figuring things out, learning new things, *on the job.*" And most professionals read journals, meet with one another. The problem is that those experiences, which are really worth more than most continuing education courses, are played down.

Then, the library is a much neglected resource. The amount of money devoted to libraries, compared to the amount devoted to schools, is terrible. It's way out of whack.

There's also the option of forming

study groups. In the 1950s and '60s I was heavily involved with this. Under the auspices of the Ford Foundation's Fund for Adult Education, 30 million dollars were spent on liberal arts discussion groups led by lay people around the country, in homes, in libraries. Eventually though these groups lost their funding because the university people said, "This stuff is not academically respectable." Now there seems to be a resurgence of these study groups, but away from the academy – people are forming informal groups that read and discuss a book. I think this is a good thing, though there's still the problem that it's not viewed as being as respectable as university courses.

I wanted to come back to other groups of people who face mandatory continuing education, besides professional people. You mentioned traffic offenders –

In most jurisdictions, if you get a certain number of traffic tickets, you're given the choice of attending a traffic school, paying a fine, or going to jail. Obviously many people choose to go to the class. Then there's prison education: if prisoners take courses, they can sometimes get out of prison earlier. I understand that taking courses may very well make life in prison more bearable, so I do sympathize with that, but often these courses are in "job skills" for jobs that don't exist or that these people could never get. Also, such courses inculcate the idea that courses are a good thing, and, again, that what one learns on one's own is not as valuable.

What about non-mandatory adult education, like the Centers for Adult Education that exist in many cities? Do you see any problem with those?

Well, even if they aren't mandatory, there's the danger that adults will think, as they were taught to think as children, that they only way to learn something is to take a class. If you doubt that this danger exists, see Lily Tomlin's hilarious video, *The Search for Intelligent Life in the Universe*. Tomlin presents so many examples of people grabbing onto adult education activities to make their lives meaningful. Some of them even develop "seminar stiffness." The idea of taking a course to solve a problem is often part of the problem, not its solution. One side is that adults have to be forced to take courses; the other side is that adults become addicted to courses and to that way of thinking about learning. All this frenzy explains why adult education today captures more dollars and more personnel than all other areas of education combined – elementary, secondary, and higher!

Of course, adults actually do have alternatives. Maybe the solution to the problem is not learning but something else, social action, mediation, etc. Also there is the library and the option of talking to people who are engaged in the activity they want to learn about. Some of these things appear more difficult than taking a course. We're inclined to say, put out a few bucks and let somebody else teach us. On the other hand, there's a growing demand for reference information in libraries, so there's some evidence that adults are seeking out information for themselves. They should feel good about doing that instead of thinking of themselves as second-class citizens because they're not taking a class.

Was so much of adult education always mandatory?

When I began to get involved with adult education, the standard rhetoric at that time was that it was voluntary and that was what made it better than schools for children. As a professor of adult education at Ohio State University I began to get students who were in fields that mandated these courses. It came as a shock to me, and I was mad at the professors who had taught me in graduate school that it was voluntary and then mad at myself for not questioning it earlier.

But at the beginning, I think most of what was called adult education was voluntary. It was simply the result of interests that people in unions, and other people, had. But as it began to look like there were more and more possibilities for this field, the definition extended to all sorts of other activities, including the mandatory one. Adult education became something people could make money off of. In the 1920s, when the Carnegie Foundation was sponsoring studies of adult education, the idea that this was something people could make money off of seemed ridiculous. Now, of course, that's completely changed.

Today, over half the American adult population is forced to go back to school. [And] even if they've managed to avoid it as children, they may not be able to avoid it as adults, or they will have to make a special effort to do so.

How did you become active in criticizing the current set-up?

After I left the university, I was talking with a friend of mine, who was also thinking of leaving. He asked what it was like to be outside of an institution. I said it could be very lonely. We started meeting with others and decided to start a small non-profit foundation to support some of the activities we were each doing. We called this group Basic Choices, Inc. I was most interested in raising the question of forcing adults to go to school, so that's what I began doing. The most popular piece I had published on the subject was written in 1971. It was called "Adult Education, 1984," and in it I prophesied fictionally that in 1984 a child born then could never look forward to getting out of school. That article, translated into several languages, received worldwide attention among educators. Another article I co-authored, "Must We All Go Back to School?", appeared in *The Progressive*, and that attracted interest as well. We were able to expand our contacts by meeting with

others at Myles Horton's Highlander Center in Tennessee, and with Ivan Illich in Mexico and John Holt in Boston. When we attended a national adult education convention in Boston, John Holt very generously let us use his office, and we put out a newsletter for several days, supporting voluntary learning. The following year, at the same convention, we prepared a motion asking adult educators to affirm the UNESCO declaration that adult education should be voluntary. Many agreed with us, but those who felt their mandatory programs would be threatened, and those who felt the trend toward requiring adults to attend courses couldn't be stopped, tabled the motion.

What kind of links do you see between your work and ours in the homeschooling movement?

John Holt told me years ago that he thought we were working on parallel fronts, and I agree. I remember the governor of Minnesota once said that if children thought they would have to go to school all their lives, they would rebel, and that's an essential point. What you're doing, in suggesting that children don't have to go to school, is a kind of rebellion, and you're trying to help families develop approaches to learning that will last them throughout their lives. In addition to offering support for that, I'm also offering a warning, which is that unfortunately, as these children leave their families and go out into the world, I'm afraid they're going to find that in so many areas of adult work, more schooling is required. So even if they've managed to avoid it as children, they may not be able to avoid it as adults, or they will have to make a special effort to do so.

Anyone wanting further information on mandatory continuing education is welcome to write me at Basic Choices, Inc., P.O. Box 9598, Madison WI 53715. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope and I'll send you a two-page article plus a list of other materials available.

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Letter to a Sup't, cont. from p. 33

had gotten no response, she called the school board member, who then called me. We talked for a little while and then she said she would call the superintendent. When he called me he said he really wanted to meet with me to hear what I had to say.

When we met, he was very nice and very interested in me. He asked how I was doing, and I could tell he was impressed even though he still believed in school. He asked me to come back to school and I told him I wasn't planning to go back because I liked what I was doing now, but if I did go back, it wouldn't be to that high school. I don't think he liked hearing that, but he did say he was sorry about what I had gone through and we had a good talk about some changes he plans to make.

One of his changes is to have in-school suspension, instead of the usual suspension where you have to be out of school. I think in-school suspension will be a better punishment because a lot of the kids want to get suspended because they hate school in the first place, so they don't think of suspension as a punishment.

He's also thinking about setting up a group of students and teachers that will talk with the students who are having problems with each other and try to help them work it out or decide on an appropriate punishment. He asked me if I wanted to be involved in that group, and I said I'd think about it. I don't think a group like that would have worked for me, but I think it could work if both sides were interested in solving the problem and weren't embarrassed to talk about it.

The superintendent also just brought in a school counselor, which they had never had before, and he's thinking about dividing the school into groups of six, and each group would have one adult to talk to. They would have group discussions and those six kids could go to that adult to talk one-on-one, so it wouldn't be the whole school trying to talk to the principal, and it would be more personal.

Another idea is to change graduation requirements. The superintendent talked about wanting to see a

portfolio of the work that the students have done, and I told him about the records I keep and the portfolio of work, and he was impressed with that.

Since I've been out of school I've grown up. I've had opportunities to do so much more – traveling, learning what I want to learn, learning *how* I want to learn, learning all sides, not just what the teacher says. Everything I do counts now, not just what I do for the grade or for the test. It makes me feel more important, more a part of the world and not just of school.

Just writing that letter started to make me feel better and made the anger start to go away. I'll always be angry that they ruined so many of my years, but I think writing the letter and maybe getting involved with some of the superintendent's ideas will help make me feel better about the past, and also I'll feel that I'm helping kids who are still there.

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue. Our complete 1994 Directory of Families was published in GWS #96. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory (check here *and* in #96 and #97). We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with the writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

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KY — Janet & Dick FUTRELL (Brook/80) Madison County Homeschool Assoc, 239 Reeves Rd, Richmond 40475

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TN — Debbie & Mike NELSON (Kayleigh/88, Nicholas/90) 417 Manor View Dr, Knoxville 37923 ••• Sara & Curtis SHARPE (Trenna/89, Jacob/92) 304 Laurel Av, S Pittsburg 37380

UT — Dan & Lynn RIDER (Lena/83, Andy/85, Ruth/88, Adam/90) 1635 W 200 S, Kamas 84036 **(H)**

VT — Bob & Kathleen ENGSTROM (Leif/84, Per/91) RD #3 Box 13 Lake Rd, St Albans 05478

VA — Jorge & Debra KEZMAN (Sarah/82, Alexandra/92) 4104 Loston Ct #104, Fairfax 22033 ••• Lynne & Bruce NOEL (Douglas/78, Dana/82, Marc/86) Rt 2 Box 429, Staunton 24401

ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1994 Directory (GWS #96) Yes ___ No ___
Or in the additions in GWS #97 or in this issue? Yes ___ No ___

WA — Barbara & Gil KION-CROSBY (Parson 88, Willow 91) 714 N 18th Pl, Mt Vernon 98273 (change) **(H)**

WI — David & Ellen LIBERTO (Jonathan 84, Jesse 87, Anne 92) Rt 1 Box 194, Menomonie 54751 **(H)**

Canada —

BC — Tia LESCHKE & Rod NYBERG (Lars 87) 2023 Maple Av RR 3, Sooke V0S 1N0

Other Locations — Paul & Cindy KERKHOF (Brandy 80, Tara 84, Sam 87, Nichole 89) 2135 River Rd, London N6A 4C3 **England** •• Bippan NORBERG & Peter SZIL, Apdo 45, 03580 L'Alias Del Pi, Alicante **Spain**

Groups to add to the Directory of Organizations that was published in GWS #96:

CA — Central Coast Homeschoolers, 7600 Marchant Av, Atascadero 93422, 805-462-0726 •• South Bay F R E E Scholars, 538 Coe Av, San Jose 95125, 408-294-0630 •• Wildflower Homeschoolers, 1557 Vancouver Way, Livermore 94550, 510-455-0465

CO — Fall River Homeschool, PO Box 3322, Idaho Springs 80452

KY — Madison County Homeschool Assoc, 239 Reeves Rd, Richmond 40475

Address Changes:

MO — St. Louis Homeschooling Network, 601 Wickford Way, Manchester 63021, 314-391-2569

NH — Support Alternative Family Education, PO Box 15, Plaistow 03865, 603-382-3839

Pen-Pals will return in issue #99.

Calendar

April 22-23, 1994: Wisconsin Parents Association 11th annual conference on home education in Stevens Point. For info: WPA, PO Box 2502, Madison WI 53701, Melissa Rice, 715-341-6378

May 6-7: National Homeschool Association regional conference in central Mass. For info: SASE to NHA, PO Box 157290, Cincinnati OH 45215-7290, 513-772-9580 or 413-637-2169

May 14: Holt Associates Fourth Annual Conference in Lexington, Mass. Workshops, panel discussion, chance to purchase our books. Write or call our office for further info.

May 14: Joy of Learning Fair in Grants Pass, OR. For info: 503-471-0111.

June 3-5: California Coalition -PALS conference in San Bernardino National Forest, California. Pat Farenga will be speaking. For info: John Boston, 619-749-1522.

June 26: Seminar on alternative schooling by John Gatto and Linda Tagliaferro in New York City. For info: Linda at 718-423-0928.

July 1-2: Catholic Family Education Conference in Seattle, WA. For info: Julia Fogassy, 206-725-9026.

We are happy to print announcements about major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #99 (events in July or later) is May 10. Deadline for GWS #100 (events in September or later) is July 10.

Subscriptions & Renewals

Subscriptions start with the next issue published. Our current rates are **$25** for 6 issues, $45 for 12 issues, $60 for 18 issues. GWS is published every other month. A single issue costs $4.50.

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Reward for bringing in new subscribers. If you convince someone to become a new subscriber - to take out a subscription at $25 a year - you will receive a $5 credit which you can apply to any John Holt's Book and Music Store order or to your own subscription renewal. Check the box under your mailing label to indicate that you are the one who brought in this new subscriber, and then clip or copy the form and have your friend fill it out and enclose the $25 payment. We will process your friend's subscription and send you the $5 credit. **This offer does not apply to gift subscriptions or renewals.** For a fuller explanation, see GWS #82, p. 2.

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Wilderness Homeschooling - reading, writing, and arithmetic, ideas, not facts, great books for young people. Live in log cabin, learn survival skills, 4-6 participants, ages 8-16. Travel to Mexico and/or France. Schole, Margaree Valley, Nova Scotia, Canada B0E 2C0, 902-248-2601.

Play It Smart - Non-trivial, cultural literacy game for the teenage homeschooler and their parents. "A unique learning experience ... useful information encompasses cognitive processes & subjects that any literate American should possess & enjoy." (R. Swoboda, President, National Literacy Foundation) Game of the Year - 1994 (Fun & Games Magazine). Picked "Best" by *The Chicago Tribune*. Business, Law, Literature, History, Science, Technology, Music, Art. Send $33.95 ($29.95 + $4 shipping) to Play It Smart, 12221 Sam Furr Rd., Huntersville, NC 28078 or call 800-258-5302 for information.

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Publisher/editor wants essays about unschooling/homeschooling by African-American homeschoolers (parents, children, teenagers). $100 minimum payment, probably much more. Write for guidelines: Lowry House, PO Box 1014, Eugene, OR 97440. Writing ability less important than experience and enthusiasm.

WALDORF EDUCATION - Free catalog of hundreds of books on the spiritual approach to family life and the growing child (including many beautifully illustrated children's books), holistic approach to health, inner development, and spiritual studies by Rudolf Steiner. Anthroposophic Press, Suite 12, RR4 Box 94A1, Hudson, NY 12534. 518-851-2054.

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Educational software, user-friendly, at big discounts, excellent for home education. Spanish titles and Usborne Books also available. Integrated Computer Products, 1-800-279-1479.

PIANO KEYBOARD INSTRUCTION PROGRAM for homeschoolers age 6 and up. Sample lesson $8 postpaid. Free brochure. Loki Music, Box 64, Brinklow, MD 20862.

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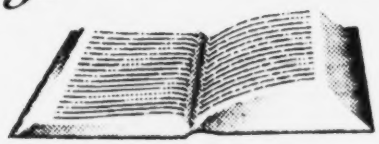
Home Education Magazine, offering more in every issue, now 68 pages bimonthly! Curent issue $3.50, free 24 page books and publications catalog. Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855, 509-486-1351.

Good Stuff: Learning Tools for All Ages, by *Home Education Magazine* Resource Editor Rebecca Rupp. 386 pages, multiple indexes, $16.75 postpaid from Home Education Press, PO Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855, 509-486-1351.

OLDER HOMESCHOOLERS' GROUP. Non-sectarian, serving teens aged approx. 12-18 in **SE MICHIGAN**, No. Ohio, & Windsor, Ont. Educational & social opportunities. 313-331-8406, Emily Linn.

Book Reviews



Diet for a New America

by John Robbins #3120 $13.95 + s/h

This is an eye-opening book about the power each individual has to help solve some of the world's greatest problems. From pollution to global hunger, from dwindling natural resources to the major causes of disease and death in humans, John Robbins details how food choices impact more directly on these issues than any other single action. Sure, recycling and giving money to "green" causes help and are easy to do, but for people who really want to make a big difference, it's time to examine where our food comes from.

Robbins gives us a long, hard look at the "Great American Food Machine," and exposes the most inhumane, wasteful, and damaging institution in the country: factory farming. The reality is pretty grim: squalid living conditions, hundreds of drugs and poisons, irreplaceable topsoil and water squandered, tons of grain fed to livestock instead of to people, the health and nutritional propaganda being presented instead of medical fact, and the coverups of chemical spills and dumping. Robbins' analysis is thorough and well-researched. Indeed, the most shocking quotes come from industry trade journals and congressional investigations.

While becoming vegetarian does make a major strike against the Food Machine, Robbins emphasizes that you don't have to competely abstain from animal products to help improve the quality of food production. However, after reading this book, you may want to. Robbins' own story of declining his inheritance to the Baskin-Robbins ice cream dynasty is inspirational, as is his conviction that your very personal food choices are among the strongest political actions you'll ever make. — Phoebe Wells

Vaccines: Are They Really Safe and Effective?

by Neil Z. Miller #1364 $7.95 + s/h

A Shot in the Dark

by Harris Coulter and Barbara L. Fisher #3154 $9.95 +s/h

Vaccines is the product of Neil Miller's research that sought to answer the following questions: Did vaccines cause the decline in the incidence of their target diseases? How effective are vaccines? Are there any serious side effects?

After an exhaustive literature search, Miller found that improved public health decreased disease rates *before* vaccines were widely marketed, that vaccinated individuals can not only remain susceptible to the disease but frequently contract unusually severe cases, and that life-threatening and permanently disabling side effects occur far more often than the medical and pharmaceutical establishments admit. Because of that last fact, *Vaccines* is one of the few ways to get the information parents need to decide for themselves which is the greater risk: the shot or the natural course of the disease.

Miller's text is concise and covers every vaccination routinely given and several more optional ones. His analysis draws from both mainstream and other sources to present information not easily accessible to most people. For further reading, Miller urges you to look up his sources, and with over 300 footnotes that's a lot of ammunition to fire at your pediatrician, legislators, or anyone else who doubts the validity of your argument. Because vested interests are intentionally obscuring the dangers of vaccines, Miller's book is absolutely essential for people who want to be truly informed.

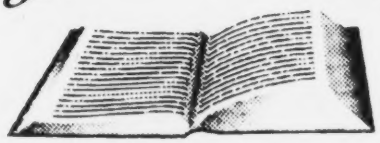
A Shot in the Dark explains why the pertussis vaccine, for whooping cough, the P in DPT, is the most controversial vaccine of them all. Despite 50 years of documented vaccine-related cases of death and mild-to-severe neurological damage, the pertussis vaccine continues to be administered without adequate warning. Furthermore, when parents have sought recognition and treatment of vaccine reaction in their children, and exemption from subsequent pertussis shots, the response they've received has ranged from denial to accusations of child abuse. Yet after reading *A Shot in the Dark*, you can understand why even parents who willingly vaccinate their children sometimes refuse the pertussis component.

Coulter and Fisher examine the controversy from many perspectives and in great detail. They also go beyond the studies and statistics to profile real families who are affected by the shot and are working to improve vaccine safety and parents' right to refuse it. In addition, the authors describe contraindications, high risk factors, and symptoms of vaccine reaction.

A Shot in the Dark is a compelling book and the most comprehensive one on the pertussis vaccine. Once you've read it, you won't be in the dark when you need to make your decision about this shot. — Phoebe Wells

120

Book Reviews



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May June 1994

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

Issue 99

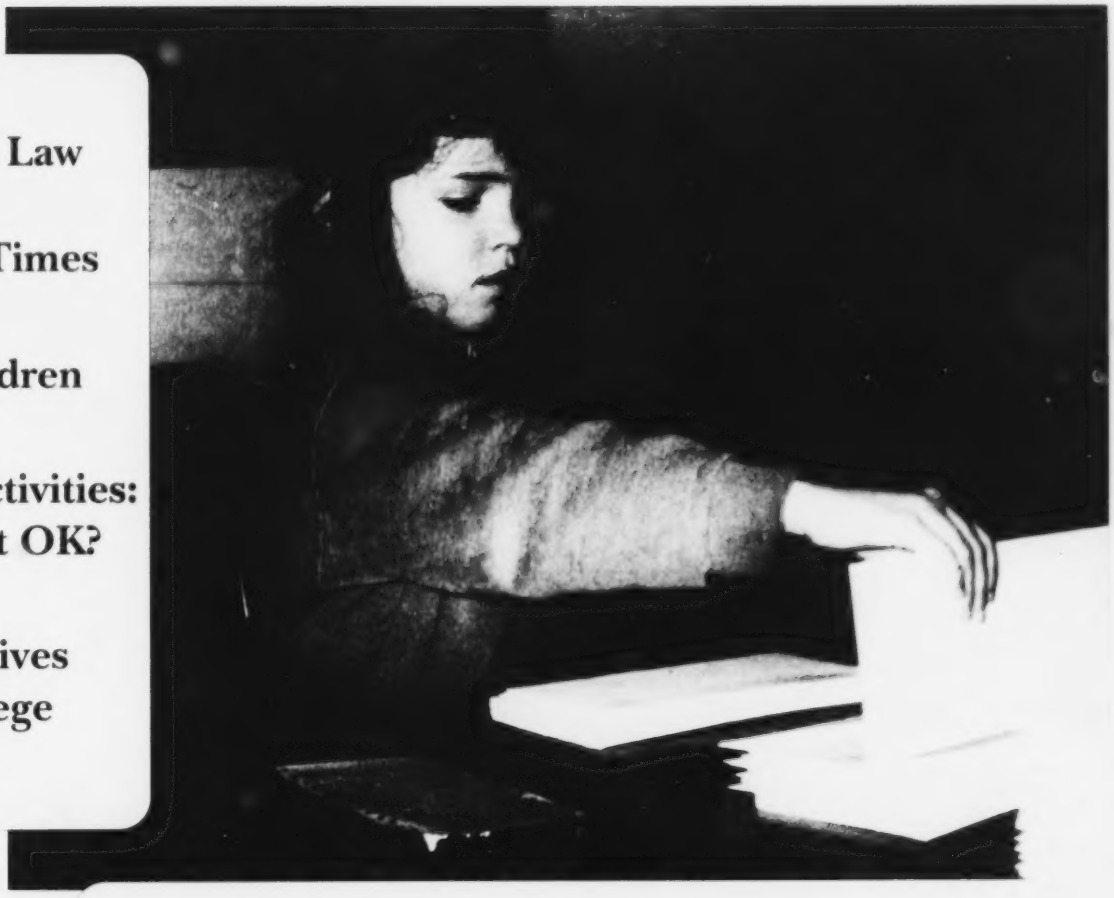
New WV Law

Difficult Times

Shy Children

Quitting Activities: When is it OK?

Alternatives to College



Young Volunteers – See p. 10

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Contents

News & Reports p. 3-5

H.R. 6 Update, Alternatives to Testing in WV, Speaking to Teachers

Difficult Times — When a Child Doesn't Seem to Be Doing Anything p. 6-7

Interpreting for Our Children p. 8-9

Helping children communicate with teachers outside the family

Young Volunteers p. 10-11

Stories about young children doing volunteer work

Challenges & Concerns p. 12-17

Responses to the letter in GWS #98 about a shy 6 year old

How Adults Learn p. 18-19

Watching Children Learn p. 20-23

Deciding to Work on Math, Top Ten Reasons, Healthier Socialization, Marine Biology

Focus: Quitting Activities p. 24-29

Alternatives to College p. 30-35

Stories and reflections from grown-up homeschoolers

The Wrong Solution p. 36

If high school is unbearable, are anti-depressant drugs the answer?

Issue #99
May/June 1994

GWS

Founded in 1977
by John Holt

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Quitting fascinates me. When a parent says to me, "My child is thinking of quitting music lessons" or "My son used to spend a lot of time drawing but now he doesn't anymore," I'm always intrigued. There are so many things these words could mean, so many things the situation might truly be about. On the one hand, the teacher might be bad, or the child might be feeling bad about himself – frustrated, stuck, unable to reach his goals. On the other hand, quitting might mean the child has a clearer sense of what kind of teacher she wants or how she wants to use her time and energy. So how can we tell what's going on? Does "I want to quit" mean "I want a break" or "I'm facing a challenge I don't know how to overcome by myself" or "I now understand what I really want" or "My interests have changed"?

The answer, of course, is to ask the young people and to listen closely to their answers, or to help them figure out the answers *by* listening to them. For this issue's Focus, young people write about why they chose to quit activities and why they sometimes chose to resume them. Their answers remind me of the Focus we did in GWS #94, on making changes in homeschooling. There, the dominant theme seemed to be that kids develop strength and insight when they see that they can evaluate their situation and modify it when necessary. Here, a similar theme emerges. In the case of the writers in this issue, "I'm a quitter" means "I *think* about what I want, how I feel, what I'm focusing on at this point in my life."

I'm struck by the realization that most kids aren't allowed to quit when they want to and thus don't develop the self-reflective abilities that help them know when it's time to quit. But kids who aren't forced to stay with a particular teacher can evaluate whether that teaching works for them. Kids who know they can take a break from something have a chance to learn when taking a break is helpful. Several of the kids in this issue returned to the activity after their break, and the time away left them refreshed and gave them a new perspective. Because their parents trust their kids' instincts and let them quit when they feel they need to, their quitting doesn't feel like a defeat. It's an indication that they're in control of their lives, able to act on what they know about themselves. So the conventional notion that quitting is bad turns out not to apply.

This issue of GWS seems to be full of challenges to conventional notions (as most of our issues are!). In "Young Volunteers," two stories challenge the idea that volunteer work is only for older kids and adults. In the "Alternatives to College" section, we have stories about homeschoolers moving out into the world as adults through routes other than college. And in the "Challenges and Concerns" section, the huge outpouring of responses to Andrvea Natkin's letter in GWS #98 about her shy 6 year old shows that shyness isn't necessarily a liability. GWS readers don't take conventional wisdom for granted, and we're grateful to you for that! — Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

H.R. 6 Update

As we said in our last issue, H.R. 6, also known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, passed in the House *without* the Miller amendment (the one that caused all the controversy) and *with* the Armey amendment and the Ford-Kildee amendment (see GWS #98 for a full description of these amendments). Now the bill is before the Senate. The Senate's version is called S. 1513, and as we write the bill is in subcommittee conference. The full conference committee will then continue to work out the differences between the House's and the Senate's versions, and a vote on the Senate Bill will be scheduled. By the time you receive this issue of GWS, it's likely that the vote will already have been taken. We expect to bring you further news in GWS #100.

Because of the response to H.R. 6, homeschoolers are now more visible to legislators and perhaps also to the general public. Many articles about H.R. 6 have been published in newspapers and in other periodicals, and some of them identify homeschooling, and homeschoolers, solely with the conservative Christian, right-wing perspective. For example, an article in the *Congressional Quarterly*, 2-26-94, says: "Thousands of angry religious conservatives, convinced that the House was about to require homeschooling parents to be government certified, besieged members with phone calls, letters, and faxes for over a week, browbeating them into killing a mandate actually aimed only at public school teachers." Also, the National Education Association's newsletter, *NEA Today*, ran this headline about H.R. 6 in their April issue: "Religious Right Runs Amuck."

We know that not all homeschoolers want homeschooling to be identified *solely* with one political or religious perspective, and these headlines suggest that it is important to make sure legislators, newspaper reporters, and others realize that homeschooling is not a monolithic movement.

New WV Law Allows Alternatives to Testing

It's always good news when a law that had previously required standardized testing of homeschoolers gets changed so that more options are available. West Virginia homeschoolers recently succeeded in making this change to their state's law, and we hope their experience will be helpful to others in states that don't currently offer these alternatives.

The new law adds more tests to the list of acceptable standardized tests homeschoolers can use, stipulates that if a child's score falls below the 40th percentile, the parents have two years in which to remediate (bring the scores up), and provides two alternatives to standardized testing: a portfolio review and alternative assessment. Martha Mishoe wrote in the April 1994 issue of the West Virginia Home Educators Association newsletter about these two alternatives:

A portfolio of samples of the child's work will not be turned in to anyone; it will simply be reviewed by a certified teacher or other person mutually agreed upon by the parent and county superintendent, who will then certify that the child's academic progress for the year is in accordance with the child's abilities (if that is indeed the case!).

"Alternative Assessment" covers a host of other possibilities. It says you must provide "evidence of an alternative academic assessment of the child's proficiency mutually agreed upon by the parent ... and the county superintendent." Possibilities include grades and evaluations from correspondence schools and/or recognized homeschool curriculum courses; an assessment from a specialized program such as the Autism Training Center, Marshall University's HELP program, and other similar programs designed to assess performance, particularly of special needs students; perhaps an assessment by interview in certain situations, etc.

Martha adds in a letter to GWS:

We were fortunate to have a professional lobbyist among the ranks of homeschoolers here. He was not able to be visibly active during our campaign, but he directed us from behind the scenes. At the beginning, his advice was that we should identify homeschoolers who knew members of the education committee on a friendly basis. When I asked him what arguments we could give to the chairman of the education committee to win him over, he said the most reasonable arguments will not necessarily win legislatively. Rather, he said, our biggest need was to find somebody of influence to listen without prejudice to what we had to say.

In our case, one mother was a personal friend of the House Minority Leader, and I had gone to school with him. He knew we were reasonable, responsible people rather than kooks. We found other people who knew other legislators. You need to know your legislators personally before you need them professionally. If you don't have any mutual friends or other natural ways of meeting, attend "Meet the Candidates" sessions or campaign for someone in whom you have confidence. If you know someone who knows someone, use their credibility to establish your own. I knew that one senator we needed to contact knew my father, so I introduced myself as my father's daughter and the senator was immediately friendly and open to what I had to say.

This might sound somewhat negative – "It's all in who you know" – but when you consider how many people are trying to influence legislation, you begin to understand legislators' need to sort out the kooks from the people they can trust.

I believe it is also helpful to establish visibility and credibility as a group. In West Virginia, we have an annual Homeschoolers' Day at the legislature. On this day, homeschoolers serve as pages in the House

and Senate, families deliver packets of information and personal letters to each legislator, we set up displays and demonstrations of homeschoolers' work around the capitol rotunda, and the hallways are filled with families instead of paid lobbyists. We make a lasting impression. One capitol worker came out this year to see the displays and said that Homeschoolers' Day is her favorite day of the year!

Another item of importance was unity among homeschoolers. In West Virginia, as in many other states (have we gotten to the point that it's *all* other states?), there are two state organizations. One is strictly a service organization while the other describes itself as a ministry. For this legislative effort we were totally united and we worked very closely with each other. Two years ago, when we tried to change our law in a similar way, someone from the other group quietly suggested to an important legislator that "we really don't want this." That was all it took – we didn't get it. The Senate Education Committee Chairwoman commented to someone that if homeschool legislation was considered this year, the homeschoolers would be fighting with each other over it. So we made sure when we met with her that there was someone from each organization present. We made our unity very clear.

Martha included a fact sheet with arguments the homeschoolers used in trying to persuade legislators to change the law. From that fact sheet:

The law as it currently stands permits only one means of assessing achievement – standardized testing. However, current educational literature is full of articles supporting the use of assessments other than standardized testing. Additionally, requiring standardized testing of *all* homeschoolers denies children with special needs and handicaps the right to this educational alternative, since for many of these children standardized testing is inappropriate or impossible.

... These alternative means of assessment ... would provide options, making accurate assessments of achievement possible in all cases. For instance, a child whose test scores never accurately reflect his level of achievement because of the stress involved could present a portfolio of his work for review, or a blind child, who could not take one of the ... tests under standardized conditions and who might not have a portfolio of materials to be reviewed could be assessed by means of an interview.

Speaking to Teachers and Administrators

Judith Schaaf (NY) writes:

This March, five adult and two pre-teen members of the New York City Home Educators Alliance were featured guests at a seminar for private school teachers and administrators, held at Teachers College, Columbia University. We had been asked to submit in advance material for the participants to read, and we chose articles by Susan Evans, David Guterson, Becky Rupp, and Earl Stevens. Because these articles so thoroughly covered the basic ideas about home education that we wanted to share, we didn't make our own presentation, but spent all of our allotted hour answering questions.

The seminar participants were delighted that our panel included young people (Mona and Isaac Weiner, ages 12 and 10), and they directed several of the first questions to them. "What is a typical day like for you?" "What do you feel are the advantages of homeschooling?" "Is there any aspect of school you would like to be able to take part in?"

About a quarter of the participants knew or had worked with homeschoolers (we asked some questions ourselves), and some seemed to take for granted that homeschooling has many benefits. One woman even asked what suggestions we had for making education in a classroom setting more like home education. A few were more skeptical of our approach and questioned how much learning really happens without lesson plans and daily doses of nose-to-the-grindstone drill. (These, as it turned out, were mostly male science and mathematics teachers.)

A number of questions addressed the possible conflict of our "teacher-student" roles with our "parent-child" roles. "What happens when you're mad at each other?" one of the participants asked. I hope we were able to convey that we do not see ourselves as teachers in the school sense but rather as question answerers and resource finders, and also that we see the interactions of daily life as an important part of the learning in our families.

There was sometimes a feeling of conflict in the air: since we are rejecting their system, we are, in a sense, implicitly criticizing it and/or them. But there was often a sense of camaraderie, too: we're all colleagues in that we do a lot of thinking about children and learning. When the seminar was officially stopped by the clock, many of the participants were interested enough to remain in the room for small group discussions.

Calendar

July 8-9, 1994: National Association of Catholic Home Educators conference in Manassas, VA. For info: Bill and Lisanne Bales, 703-349-4334.

July 30: Catholic Home Educators regional conference in Pasadena, CA. For info: 818-441-7714.

Aug. 12-14: "Family: The Heart of Education" conference sponsored by the Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education at SUNY Brockport, Brockport, NY. Speakers include Pat Farenga and John Taylor Gatto. For info: AllPIE, PO Box 59, E Chatham NY 12060; 518-392-6900.

Aug. 27: "Homeschooling '94" – Toronto area conference with David and Micki Colfax, Jane Hoffman, Wendy Priesnitz. Contact Colin Singleton, 1-800-669-0724 or 905-828-1684.

Sept. 30-Oct. 2: National Homeschool Association annual conference at Camp Ernst, Kentucky. For info: NHA, PO Box 157290, Cincinnati OH 45215-7290; 513-772-9580.

We are happy to print announcements about major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #100 (events in September or later) is July 10. Deadline for GWS #101 (events in November or later) is September 10.

Office News

[SS:] On May 14th we had our fourth annual Holt Associates / GWS conference in Lexington, Mass. We had a panel of three homeschooling teenagers who spoke about their experiences and offered their thoughts, stressing the importance of trusting young people and not thinking that homeschooling has to be just like school. Pat Farenga gave a talk about how homeschooling is running counter to many national trends in education, including the America 2000 plan. We also had workshops, discussions, and time for networking. We are now selling tapes of Pat's talk, the teen panel, and the workshop on homeschooling 9-12 year olds, given by experienced homeschooling parents Wanda Rezac and Susan Ostberg. The tapes are $6 each. See our Spring catalog for more info.

In late February Pat Farenga spoke to the Ohio Valley Area Library Association about homeschoolers and library use, drawing in large part on the responses to the survey that we published in GWS. Pat says that the librarians were generally very responsive and interested in helping homeschoolers. By the time you get this issue Pat will have also spoken at the New Jersey Unschoolers Network conference and the California Coalition – PALS conference. On June 11th he'll be at the Homeschool Associates – New Jersey conference, and on June 22nd he'll be at the Homeschool Associates – Detroit conference.

In late April I met with editors at Heinemann-Boynton Cook to discuss bringing back into print a series of education classics – some of John Holt's books and books by James Herndon, Daniel Fader, and others. I'm excited to have the chance to be the series editor for this project and to bring these important books back into circulation. It looks as though we'll begin with two of Holt's books, mostly likely *What Do I Do Monday?* and *Freedom and Beyond*, and two by other people. We'll keep you posted as the production schedule becomes firm.

For your information, the groups or companies to which we have rented our mailing list, or portions thereof, since December 1, 1993, are as follows: Home Education Magazine, North Country School, Smart Stuff & Good Ideas, Creative Learning Systems, Learning Link, Boomerang Magazine, American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Greathall Productions.

We no longer have good addresses for the following homeschooling organizations: Alaska Homeschool Association; Arizona Families for Home Education; Southern Indiana Support Group; Family Learning Connection (OK); Wyoming Homeschoolers. If you live in one of these states, please let us know if the group is still running and what its current address is. If the group is no longer operating, has another group taken its place?

We are always happy to forward letters to people whose writing has appeared in GWS, but we need you to include a stamped envelope so that we are not paying for the postage. If you want us to consider printing it, send us another copy, in addition to the one you want forwarded.

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Difficult Times — When a Child Doesn't Seem to be Doing Anything

About a year ago, Lynne Thunderstorm (BC), a long-time reader of GWS, wrote to say that she was having some difficult times as a homeschooling mother. She was going through those doubts that so many parents feel, wondering if her daughter Raven, then almost 13, was doing enough. I (Susannah Sheffer) suggested that both Raven and Lynne write to me so that I could hear both perspectives before I tried to reply, and they responded by sending a tape in which they talked with one another about the problems they were experiencing. The tape covered many topics, but the one that Raven, Lynne, and I want to share with GWS readers had to do with Lynne's concern about Raven's not doing enough activities that showed an obvious product. On the tape, Raven said that when it seemed as though she was just staring into space, she was really *thinking*, and she wished her parents would realize that. (I'm summarizing a long conversation here, but I think this will feel familiar to many readers.) I responded to this part of the tape by writing:

I was struck by the eloquence in Raven's description of what she wants – how she wants to be able to be creative on her terms, and how she wants it understood that she's thinking about important things, not just spacing out, when it looks on the surface like she isn't doing anything. To me, this is a big part of what's going on: if Raven doesn't feel fully appreciated or recognized, it's probably hard for her to be willing to do certain things that would assuage your anxieties, Lynne. In other words, if she often has the nagging feeling that even when she's allowed to choose what to do, the choices she makes aren't the choices you'd really like her to make, that can undermine the whole purpose of letting her be self-directed, and I believe it can make your relationship more strained than you'd like it to be. (See "A Mother Learns to Understand Her Child" in GWS #92 for some thoughts on this dynamic.)

Please understand here that I really do sympathize with the fears and anxieties that have led to all this. You folks are doing a new and experimental thing by letting Raven learn outside of school and direct her own learning, and I know you don't have a lot of support for that choice, so it's bound to be difficult sometimes. ... I wonder, though, if it would be possible for Raven to do what *she* feels is creative or worthwhile – at least for a time, as she said, like maybe for this coming year, as an experiment – rather than focusing on what she knows you want to see her do. Can her homeschooling be thought of in a way that will recognize her temperament and her strengths (as she said, "in a way that lets me be me"), rather than in a way that makes her feel as if she's chafing at an expectation that she be something different?

OK, so what does all that mean in practice? Well, one thing has to do with your differing expectations of what it means to have something to show for your time. What I'm wondering is, how can Raven's periods of introspection, of figuring things out and thinking about important things, *count*, so to speak? How can you both make it such that that activity – thinking, wondering, figuring – which Raven does so much of, maybe because that's simply the kind of person she is, and maybe especially because at her time of life, such introspection becomes particularly important – how can you make it such that that activity is seen as *what Raven did today*, at least in part? You know what I mean? I'm thinking of a sort of revolution in your thinking which would turn staring into space and figuring things out into a meaningful, valid way to spend time, rather than something that Lynne would worry about or Raven would feel guilty about. ...

I'll quote something to illustrate this further. There's a wonderful new book out called *Real Lives*, which is a collection of essays by teenagers who are homeschooling, and I recommend it highly. One of the essays is by a boy named Patrick Meehan, who went to school for most of his life (having miserable experiences there) and then left at 13. He's now 16. Here he's writing about his first year out of school:

"Another thing that bugged my mother was that I'd sometimes sit around and look off into space for what seemed hours on end. She would accuse me of wasting time.

"But I was not wasting time. No. There is no such thing as wasting time. Whether in art or math or philosophy, important thoughts do not pop, fully formed, into one's mind. One must develop them bit by bit. I'm sure all the great thinkers have appeared to others to be wasting time."

There have been other stories like this in GWS, but Patrick's comes immediately to my mind. I also recommend Wanda Rezac's letter in GWS #93 in which she talks about how important just plain conversations have been in her family, how much her kids have learned from them.

What I'm saying, in all of this, is that if a large part of Raven's personality – again, maybe just in general, maybe especially now, at this age – is that of a dreamer, philosopher, etc., my wish for your family would be to find a way to value that unequivocally and even see it as a big advantage of homeschooling that that can be nourished (because, as you know, in school it very likely wouldn't be). See homeschooling as serving this characteristic, which seems to be so central to who Raven is, rather than as always struggling against it, and I think many things will feel a lot easier.

Now, what about having something to show? Well, there's potentially a lot to say about this, but I'll try to be brief. One idea, of course, is to relax your concern about this, but another (which will probably be more useful) is to broaden your interpretation of what it means to have something to show. When parents have to keep records for the school officials or to satisfy the law, I often suggest that

they record intangible things, too – write down summaries of interesting conversations you had, questions kids asked, etc. Now, I know this can have its own difficulties, because it can get awkward or intrusive to be that self-conscious all the time, always noting down what was said or discussed. But I guess what I'm really saying is that when you, Lynne, find yourself thinking back to what happened this week, or this month, if you allow yourself to count the intangible things, too, I predict you'll feel a lot better about how Raven has spent her time. You were talking about wanting to see progress. If you allow yourself to think in terms of progress of one's thinking, or one's intellectual or emotional growth, I'm hoping that that might broaden the definition enough to allow you to see progress where before it had been difficult to recognize. One thing that might help with this, incidentally, is Gareth Matthews's work; his two books are *Philosophy and the Young Child* and *Dialogues With Children*. The first book is about kids younger than Raven; the kids in the second book are closer to her age. But in both cases he's describing kids' conversations or just plain wondering, and he knows how to recognize the significance of such things – and, even more important for you, maybe, he helps you to understand how to recognize growth in these areas over time.

Lynne responded:

I feel encouraged to go back to the way we used to do things around here and before we moved to this place where unschooling is unheard of but where everyone *home*schools. Since Leaf [Raven's older sister] was always busily doing something, it was easy to see how self-directed learning benefited her. With Raven, my learning has been slow.

In particular, your pointing out to me how conversations are valuable products, as it were, has been the most startling observation. Of course! It makes sense! What a talker Raven is. People of all ages find her interesting, and even yesterday, when I was discussing, with difficulty, a philosophical approach to living with a friend of mine, Raven articulated a flaw in both our reasonings so well she got us on to a more productive track.

I wrote again:

I'm glad that the notion of conversations as a valuable product helped. I see it in two ways: first, and of course most important, conversations really are valuable in real life. Second, if one is thinking in schoolish terms, think about how kids in school at Raven's age are supposed to be having discussions in class. Yes, we know that those discussions are often stilted and artificial, which is why the real-life ones are better, but the point is that a teacher's lesson plan might very well say something like, "Have a discussion about ____", so in that sense it can count as a schoolish thing when you do it, too. Not that that's a primary reason to have conversations in a family, of course, but you see what I mean. ...

And Lynne wrote several months later:

The decision to legitimize conversation as a product has been a good one for us. It has increased Raven's self-esteem. She has always believed her contributions were worth something, and has resisted our unwise criticisms concerning her "not doing anything." Nevertheless, it has meant a lot to her for us to lay off, to ease up the pressure, to accept her spoken words as work she has completed in the same way we would have accepted a written paper.

I wonder why I never thought of it before. Raven is thinking about things all the time and is always ready to talk, whenever there is someone who will listen. I find I can bounce ideas off her better than anyone around here. That is what she is ready for!

For instance, I am leading a workshop this week on racism, and it is a touchy, scary topic. Raven has listened to my notes for the talk with complete attention and has given wonderful advice whenever I have needed it. She understands nuances, recognizes possible sources of misunderstanding, and offers suggestions for improved clarity. I appreciate that and I trust her judgment. Maybe she doesn't have the store of information and knowledge that many schoolchildren have. But what she does have is an ability to notice what's going on, ask questions, apply her intelligence, and figure things out.

This isn't to say that all our problems have been solved. ... Nevertheless, with the pressure off in the academic sphere, we have both been able to relax and allow Raven's life to unfold. One new adventure is her friendship with an older girl who also homeschools and who also has a dislike for structured academics. Together they plan to write and produce a play for the neighborhood homeschoolers to perform at the school in town. They also discuss plans for craft projects and a theme party in the spring. I now realize that it doesn't matter whether any of these plans make it off the drawing board. What does matter in these brainstorming sessions is the feeling of camaraderie, of possibility, of power to shape her life.

It has meant a lot to her for us to lay off, to ease up the pressure, to accept her spoken words as work she has completed in the same way we would have accepted a written paper.

Something else Raven has done is housesitting for two neighbors who are away. It entails walking or skiing four and a half miles each trip to the two houses, keeping the fires going and the animals milked and cared for, and making sure the temperatures in the root cellars don't get too low. Some days she has had to make the trip twice. She feels good knowing people are relying on her to do this work.

Interpreting for Our Children

When children work with adults outside the family, they may need their parents to remain involved. Jo-Anne Beirne writes about how she helps her children communicate with other teachers.

Jo-Anne Beirne (Australia) writes:

Now that we have been homeschooling for some years, a great deal of what I do with my older children seems to involve helping them work with other adults and interpreting their desires for those adults. Take music, for instance. Over the years we have had many music teachers with a range of qualifications. At the moment we use Peter, who is a musician of over twenty years' experience, though he is an engineer by trade.

Everyone in our family likes his personality and likes him as a musician and, most important, he is an adult teacher who listens to other adults and children – fairly rare in our experience. However, this does not mean that when music lessons happen I get some free time. In fact, with three children who have different reasons for doing music and different ways of getting their learning done, and with a teacher who has specific ideas on the way music should work, I do a lot of work mediating between the children and their teacher.

It has been my experience that most "outside-the-home" teachers have an agenda for their pupils, whether this be in gymnastics, pottery, or music. This means that while they react (to different degrees) to what the kids are doing, they still think that "A" comes first, followed by their particular "B, C, and D." Sometimes they may pretend they can cope with requested changes, but basically they feel they know best on content and sequence.

Now, I know my kids very well and I don't feel committed to a sequential approach. For example, it seemed crazy to me to leave trigonometry (chapter 5) in the Grade 8 book to go on to geometry (chapter 6) when Gregory (who is nearly 14) was really interested in trig. At that point we were breezing through trig and it was just as easy for us to follow it into the Grade 9 and 10 textbooks, taking it to a logical conclusion. I mean, who decides what is appropriate trig for a 13 year old?

However, our flexibility in many areas causes a great deal of stress to the children's other teachers. If Gregory says, as he did a couple of months ago to me, "Look, I love guitar and I want to concentrate on it, but I will keep doing piano in case I get a keyboard in the future. I will practice regularly by myself, and I want to be able to ask Peter if I need help but I don't want to have regular lessons in piano with him or to play with the fingers he tells me to play or to play at the speed he thinks is right and I want to choose my own pieces – is this OK?" I have no problem with this, but Gregory does not feel he can say this to Peter himself, despite Peter's good will toward Gregory, so I have to be the go-between.

I spend a great deal of time educating our music teacher about our way of thinking, the kids' ways of learning, and their goals for themselves.

I am improving at the "go-between" process slowly, though I find I have to be a diplomat of U.N. qualifications sometimes. In the past we have stopped using many teachers who would not listen to what we wanted or would not let me sit in on the lesson or were totally dictatorial in approach or treated the kids like second-class citizens while being ever so nice to mother.

Now we have Peter who listens, but things still need to be handled carefully. If Gregory or I were to say to Peter directly, "This is what Gregory wants," Peter would usually give us great arguments on why Gregory is wrong, with a "how does Gregory possibly know what is right?" sound in his voice. Recent examples were, "If he doesn't play with the correct fingers it defeats the purpose of playing" or "He shouldn't pick modern pieces at the equivalent of Grade 7 when he can only work at Grade 5 level" or "He plays too much loud pedal if I don't keep on him not to do it."

I do try to weigh up Peter's knowledge and opinion, but basically I lean towards Gregory's opinions because this is very much what we value in our homeschooling. We've encouraged the children to think for themselves and so we need to give them the space to see that we trust them on issues they feel strongly about, now that they are older. I truly feel that Gregory is old enough to have a right to make such choices. I trust him, and besides, I do not feel that if he doesn't learn something now it will ruin his future or potential. I have read John Holt and GWS for long enough to know that he can certainly retrace his steps at any time if he finds a hole in his learning or some need he wants to fulfill in any subject.

Despite Peter's best intentions I can see that he often reacts to my feedback with the attitude that he is the adult and the music teacher and children and non-musical mothers aren't really allowed equal opinions. Often I even find myself having to sit in on Gregory's lesson to make sure that Peter does the things he has agreed to do or places emphasis where we want it – and he is the best music teacher we've ever had.

I have the same interactions with Rebecca (12) and Stephen (nearly 10), even though the complaints and misunderstandings are usually completely different from Gregory's. They might feel that they are doing too much music or not enough or that they are not being challenged or that Peter is going too fast. I feel that we are continually pushing Peter to treat

each person as a unique individual despite the fact that they are all from the one family (how does a classroom teacher ever manage this with 20+ students?).

In the last twelve months Peter has become more empathetic and responsive to the children's feelings, which is a credit to his nature, competence, and professionalism. Stephen, for example, loves to compose, and Peter is happy to facilitate this, but Stephen gets mightily offended if Peter contributes even one note or a suggestion of a note. This is in striking contrast to his playing, where Stephen is more than happy for Peter to be totally involved. Stephen seems to see Peter as the tool that enables him to know more about the piano sooner, and to him the piano itself is separate from the music he hears in his head, in which Peter has no part. Peter now sees this, I think, and is able to give appropriate "stand back" guidance (for the moment). This has taken some work on all our parts.

Rebecca, on the other hand, is far less passionate about the dynamics and intricacies of music. She plays guitar and drums to be part of the action, but these instruments are far less important in her life than piano is to her brothers. Rebecca sees a lot of the work of taking a piece to perfection – which the boys like – as an enormous waste of time. This takes some energy to explain to a devoted musician like Peter and is another interesting challenge for him after working with two intensely devoted, idiosyncratic musicians.

Mary-Beth (4) is getting in on the action too. We saw the movie *Free Willy* and she decided she had to play the theme song. Everyone else in the family plays what they want to play, so why shouldn't she? But this is not the traditional way for a 4 year old to start piano. I would never have had the courage or the knowledge to tell our previous music teachers that I was perfectly happy to go with the child on this one and work out the difficulties creatively as we got to them. Now I know better and so we have removable color dots on our piano keys and colored dot music and one happy 4 year old who has had the opportunity to see a problem solved and a piece played just as she wants it.

Talking through these issues, – whether they be big or small, means that I spend a great deal of time educating Peter to our way of thinking, the kids' ways of learning, and their goals for themselves. I think this self-appointed job is an important one, if time-consuming and frustrating sometimes. Until they are older the job will never go away, especially as each of our children is so different. Peter is a thoughtful person and usually has good reasons for his suggestions and emphasis. However, my job, as I see it, is listening closely to what the kids want, because after all it is their music and their lives. It takes time and effort to help the children find what is right and works for them. I seem to be getting better (slowly) at balancing information and stretching personal desire to explore and discover, and as long as we keep working on our feedback with each other, we will get there.

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Young Volunteers

Volunteer work isn't just for older kids! These young children are making a contribution through their own volunteer jobs.

At a Peace Organization

Phoebe Wells (MA) writes:

The last time I took my son Eoin to his volunteer job at the regional office of the American Friends Service Committee, the editor of their magazine, *Peaceworks*, and I began chatting about our Easter holidays. We hadn't talked long when Eoin, who is almost 7, interrupted us, saying, "I'm here to work!" I took my cue and left him to his job.

Eoin Gaj and Pat Farren working together

The story of how Eoin came to work for *Peaceworks* really began two years ago when a librarian handed him *Red Hawk's Account of Custer's Last Battle* and ignited his passion for Native American culture. In the course of our reading every children's book we could find on the subject, Eoin found several descriptions of Columbus's treatment of the Taino. Later that year, when some friends told Eoin about a protest planned for the Columbus Quincentennial, Eoin was eager to participate. By carrying a sign, distributing pamphlets, joining in the chants, and speaking in the meeting circle, Eoin was able to feel that he too was helping to end the oppression of Native peoples.

Having had such a good experience then, Eoin anticipated helping even more for the 501st anniversary of Columbus's arrival. Unfortunately, as the day approached, we found that no protest had been organized for that year. When our friends heard how frustrated Eoin was, they suggested we contact the local AFSC office, as it had helped to plan the previous year's protest. I spoke with Pat Farren, the editor of *Peaceworks*, who was touched that someone so young was interested in making a serious contribution to world peace. Having remembered Eoin from the protest, Pat understood Eoin's commitment and interest, and he welcomed him as a volunteer.

Since then Eoin has volunteered monthly, usually to help with mailings by attaching address labels and taping the magazine closed when there is an insert in it. He is quite pleased with this job. Because it is necessary work, its menial nature doesn't bother him a bit, and he feels valued because he can see a project accomplished more quickly when he pitches in. He knows that his help frees up the staff to get on with other work that he cannot yet do, such as tasks requiring reading and writing. He actually finds the work quite satisfying.

Eoin's volunteer time is also very important to him because of the people he's met and the conversations they've shared while working together. Eoin always comes away from his job very thoughtful about whatever they've been discussing – the origins of violence, political prisoners, having family and friends in the military. I can see that it's very mind-expanding for Eoin to hash out these issues with his co-workers, and he's become more optimistic about the world's future now that he has meaningful work with other peace activists.

Possibly the most amazing aspect of Eoin's job, to me, is his independence from the family. Even though I made the phone calls to arrange the job, I was merely following through on Eoin's initiative. In fact, had the planning been up to me and Eoin's father, we might never have considered AFSC as a place for Eoin to volunteer.

Also, he works there on his own without any of us with him, which is shocking to many who know him. He has been famous for never going anywhere or doing anything without me by his side, but he happily says goodbye to me at the door and hates to leave when it's time to go. He knows his 2-year-old brother would wreck the place if we stayed, and he didn't hesitate to opt for going alone over not going at all. I never thought I'd see the day when he'd go someplace without me, and he does still require my presence at some activities, but he's begun the transition.

Another surprise to those who know Eoin is how someone who is as intensely interested in war as he is can work as a peace activist. For over two years now Eoin has devoured information about various wars (the War of 1812 is his latest favorite) and other legendary fights (Robin Hood, etc.). He constantly reenacts different scenarios. Eoin doesn't find this strange, though. "Just because I'm interested in war stuff doesn't mean I ever want to really fight. There's other ways to work out problems. Don't you know I work for *Peaceworks*!" he says with the clear vision of a young child.

Serving Meals to Elderly People

Nora Muller of North Carolina writes:

My daughter, Zoe, was a volunteer for Meals on Wheels for the past year and a half, starting when she was 6 1/2. Meals on Wheels is a program of our country's Project on Aging. It provides hot meals at mid-day for elderly shut-ins and arranges for volunteers to deliver them. Once each week, Zoe and I drove to our local community center and picked up 16–23 meals, along with a list of recipients. These were, more or less, the same people each time. Then I would drive to the homes on the list and Zoe (most of the time) would deliver the meals. She had to read the list to find out each recipient's particular needs (skim or whole milk, diabetic dessert, etc.), assemble the parts of the meal from various insulated containers, and take the meal to the recipient. It took about two hours to run the route.

When we first started this service project, Zoe was enthusiastic about doing it. She learned the names of all the recipients and wanted to deliver all the meals herself. She made friends with several of the people we served. She would sometimes hand the person the meal at the door and sometimes go inside to put the meal down on a table. She was fascinated to see how different people live and remarkably willing to relate to everyone, including disabled people.

As we continued to do this work, Zoe's interest became inconsistent. Some weeks she was really excited about doing it, and at other times she was reluctant, wanting to deliver only some of the meals. At first it was hard for me to accept less than full participation from her, especially since she had started out so fully engaged in the project. Eventually I came to see that it was OK for her participation to be whatever she could do, and that it was OK for her engagement level to change.

I think there were several reasons why she lost interest. Most important, as she learned what she could from the experience, she started to feel bored. Also, I know that it takes a lot of psychic energy to interact with so many different, and often somewhat strange, people in rapid succession, and some weeks she just wasn't up to it. And two hours is a long time for someone her age to focus on a project of this emotional complexity.

I feel strongly that this was a terrific project for her to do and that it was also fine for her to stop doing it. When I asked her what she did and didn't like about it, she said that she really liked some of the people she met and that she didn't like how much time it took away from doing other things. In general, I think this was a good age for her to do this work. It seems that a lot of my children's learning when they are around 6–8 has been about who people outside the family are and how to be with them. Getting to see how other people live has helped Zoe to be more appreciative of her own lifestyle. Getting to know people who look or act different from "normal" people has helped her to be more accepting of others. Meeting people with serious problems (poverty, deafness, alcoholism, mobility impairment) has given her a chance to ask questions and form opinions about the world. Introducing her to some of these issues in terms of individuals she knows personally, rather than on the grand scale of nations, has helped her to avoid being overwhelmed by them. She has had a chance to think of social problems as things to address rather than avoid and to see that they *can* be changed for the better. Making friends with people much older than herself has helped her to see herself as part of the whole community. Finally, because she was able to work directly with people who benefited immediately from her work, she was able to appreciate the impact of what she did, both on herself and on the community.

For more stories about kids doing volunteer work, see GWS #95, #88, #85, #79, #66

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Challenges & Concerns

These writers are responding to Andryea Natkin's letter in GWS #98 about a shy 6 year old who resists her mother's efforts to interest her in new activities.

Helping Him Overcome Shyness

From Cindy Gaddis of Pennsylvania:

I can't believe I found another person with a child just like mine! My son Eric (just turned 7) is an observer first, participant second; for his milestones, such as walking and toilet training, he waited until he could do it without mishap; he is emotionally sensitive; he insists upon the unschooling philosophy (and I like it now, too); when I started with "school at home" our first year, Eric, like your daughter Mara, would cover his ears and sing so as not to hear me; he too enjoys the indoors more than the outdoors; he must be told to get moving if we all go to the store, a walk, etc.; he has an outstanding imagination and is artistic and prefers creative play over physical play; he has a long attention span; his best friend is his sister Abbey and for friends he prefers one or two close friends who have similar natures.

When Eric was around 2 or 3 I noticed that he was extremely shy toward other people. They would say hi and he would hide behind me and not say anything. I had two things on my side at this point that you may not. I recognized this tendency early and I was in a situation in which he had daily contact with many different people (we were in college, living in family housing).

I decided then that I would begin helping Eric overcome this shyness. I began by asking him to say hi to people if they said hi to him. At least daily someone would say hi to him and of course he would not respond. So I would stop, bend down to his level, and ask him to say hi. Sometimes it would take him five minutes but after he said it, the person would always be smiling at him and it made him feel rewarded that someone liked him and wanted to get to know him.

Then I moved on to saying, "Isn't it nice that people like you and say hi to you." Now when we would walk by someone I knew he liked, I would say, "Why don't you say hi to so-and-so so she knows that you like her?" And so he would.

When the children his age were beginning to ride tricycles, Eric preferred to run alongside them. I allowed this because I recognized that Eric needed extra time. I had supplied a tricycle for him to ride as he desired. In this case, all I needed to do was remind him that he had a bike and that he could ride too so that he could have fun like the others. He did this pretty much on his own.

Then came the big bike with training wheels. This was trickier because he was more fearful of the bigger bike. Besides, he had become quite proficient at the trike. Once again I allowed him to observe while all the other children began this process. I supplied the new bike and drew from his last experience. I said, "Remember when you didn't want to ride your tricycle at first and would rather run? Then when you tried it, you liked it, and after practicing, you are quite good at it now. I know at first it will seem hard to do this bigger bike, but if you practice just like you did with your tricycle, I promise you that you will be just as good and you'll think it's even more fun."

Well, with my hands-on help at first and a few times of backtracking, he rode the bike, and he did get better and thought it was more fun. Now we are going through the same process as he learns to ride without training wheels. I pull from his previous experience, help him during the first bit, let him taste victory even if it's just for one second (I let go and he can see that I did and it gives him courage to succeed). He is now doing well on the two-wheeler although I had my doubts that he ever would.

In our homeschooling, it finally occurred to me only recently that as in other parts of his life, he was also afraid to fail in our homeschooling. I realized that this might be why he didn't want to read. He was afraid he might not get it so he just wouldn't do it. So I had to look for his ready signs. I could tell that he had the ability to read, just not the confidence. So I began our reading program with – yes, I did it – bribes. A money bribe at that. He happens to be very much into money at this age, so I used it. Now the program I am using happens to be just right for Eric's personality. It starts children out reading real words within seven lessons. Eric needed this for the "build on previous success" theory of mine. And it is working. He felt his confidence with each word and he is quite proud that he is sure he can master this reading business. Now he actually asks for the reading lesson each morning.

I suggest making a conscious effort to let Mara see you and your husband and others make mistakes. Make a verbal note of it to her and explain that one learns from one's mistakes in order to get better. Emphasize practice to her because people like her would rather be able to do it right the first time and she needs to be reminded that practice is the key to most success.

For example, when Eric began drawing at age 3, he began with real pictures. It soon became apparent to us that he was quite talented in this area. My husband happened also to be talented in this area. Eric would often ask his dad to draw pictures for him. This allowed Eric to observe first, and he could draw his dad's pictures quite effectively. But then he began always to ask his father to draw for him, and he stopped drawing himself. He finally admitted to us that he couldn't draw the pictures because he might make a mistake.

That's when it occurred to us that Weston rarely made a mistake in drawing the pictures for Eric because they were more basic for him, and

thus easy. So privately, we planned for Weston to make mistakes, erase them or just go over them, and point it out to Eric in a natural manner. It worked beautifully! We also took the time to explain to Eric that Dad had been drawing since he was a small boy and he had to practice a long, long time to get as good as he was now and Eric would need to practice too. We would periodically show Eric his previous drawings so he could see how much he had improved through practicing.

I do knitting and crocheting and when I made a mistake, I would comment aloud and tell Eric I had to pull out all the work up to the mistake and start over. I would recall to him that when I first began to knit and crochet I would cry and cry when I had to pull my work out. While he was working on learning to ride a bike, I told him that when I first learned to ride a bike I took many more spills than he did (mainly because I had to do it all by myself!).

Children like Eric and Mara are not easy children to understand sometimes, but I sometimes feel that Eric and I have a deeper bond because I have had to truly understand him from the inside out. I have no doubts that homeschooling is for Eric and my husband has come to understand that more and more.

Honor His Feelings

From Marina Tidwell (CA):

Your description of Mara sounded very much like my oldest, Ted, age 6. I'm sure my acquaintances would scoff at that idea because Ted very early on developed a persona to cover his shyness and introverted style. In company he becomes boisterous and aggressively outgoing, almost as if he feels compelled to bulldoze his way through his own insecurities. This can make him a little insensitive to others, so I wish he had Mara's self-possession. He certainly seems to share her internal temperament.

Maybe the reason Ted (like Mara) covers his ears is because my voice is competing too much with his own inner voice which tells him that his needs are so different from what I offer him. I know at times Ted really feels that no one understands him. He's too young to articulate what he does need, so hands over the ears, turning away, "Mommy, stop!" are his only defenses – very good ones too!

What do I do under these circumstances? Honor his feelings. Sometimes I have to give myself a "time out" in order to manage, but I feel anything less is disrespectful and has more to do with my insecurities than with his needs. Whenever I feel particularly insecure I replay to myself the time in the park when Ted was 16 months old and outrunning the toddlers who'd been walking since they were 9 months old. It was a great victory for Ted after months of watching the other children and for me after months of enduring the other mothers' sympathy and helpful advice. I'll never forget their gaping astonishment.

As far as Mara and Clara's companionship goes – Ted and his younger brother Tom have the same relationship, and indeed I had the same sort of relationship with my younger sister, who's also three years younger. My sister's friendship was the best thing about my childhood and I deeply and vocally resented any attempts to separate us. We started to grow apart, very slowly, naturally, and comfortably, when I was about 12 or 13 and she was about 9 or 10. I've always felt that she and I understand and accept each other completely, even though we're not all that much alike.

Noticing the Good Things

From Susan Gaulin (MA):

We have two sons, Cliff (6) and Jake (3). We have gone through some of the things you described. Cliffy wouldn't leave my side at any activities or acknowledge any attention directed towards him. When he was 5 I had to sit on the floor with him at a story hour for 3-4 year olds at the library. All the other mothers went upstairs.

You described Mara as not willing to try something unless she is very sure she can do it. This fits Cliffy to a T. It is a big problem because if he does try something new and can't do it, he gets extremely frustrated, but if he only does things that he already knows how to do, he quickly gets bored.

I had to laugh at your description of Mara covering her ears when you try to discuss any kind of study or learning. That's exactly what Cliffy does. He doesn't accept any kind of formal teaching. He is reluctant to go anywhere – shopping, activities I've scheduled. Anything that interrupts a normal day at home bothers him.

You do seem to have a good positive perspective on it all. I commend you on this. I wasn't so sound in my thoughts. We sent Cliffy to kindergarten for two weeks. It was a big mistake! At least you had the knowledge not to do this. I can't even begin to tell you what we went through. It wasn't too hard to convince my husband to keep Cliffy at home after that, because he was the one bringing him to school (Cliffy wouldn't go on the bus) and it was hard physically and emotionally.

It sounds to me like you're doing plenty for Mara. I'm surprised that she's going along with that much, and you have already picked up on some of her interests. That's great! As for reading and writing and numbers, I think the only thing you can do is expose her to these things in a way that interests her. Cliffy likes Monopoly, and through it he's learning about money and about counting, through counting the numbers on the dice. He can now add the numbers without counting each individual dot.

He's interested in money in general, and we just started giving him change for jobs done around the house. This is a good way to learn about numbers. Many card games are helpful. Cliffy even made his own cards with higher numbers. Playing with a tape measure and building something simple that needs measuring is another good way to work with numbers.

I find that Cliffy won't even look at anything written on paper, but if we write in the sand, or with chalk outside, or with sticks and stones, or by making letters with our bodies, he is sometimes more apt to enjoy it.

It surprises me when Cliffy does learn things. It's usually when I'm not teaching him or trying to show him something. I think to myself, "Hey,

wait a minute! When did you learn that?"

I'm trying to get him to at least say hi to others. Now when someone offers to shake his hand, he looks the other way, ignoring them. I've found that it helps a little to tell him that it is just plain polite manners to say hello to people. Since he is always wanting to do things the right way, I think this helps a little.

I'm also trying to point out all the good things he does and encourage these, even when it is not the way *I* think he should be doing it. I had found myself making too many negative comments – "You don't do this, you don't say that" – which didn't help his self-esteem any.

All in all, I'm thankful that he now has the opportunity to be himself, instead of having his emotions and personality stifled in a schoolroom, with someone else telling him what he should be doing and learning.

Play is Necessary

From Mary Anderson (OR):

I have three children. The oldest is 13. They have always learned at home. When my two oldest were young, I tried not to pressure them into academics, but using the Oak Meadow curriculum, I introduced them to numbers and letters using art and storytelling. They enjoyed this but resisted anything too school-like. Both of them learned to read at about age 7 (or was it 8?). My daughter eventually got interested in reading the Little House books to herself. (We all read several of them out loud first.) My oldest son (now 12) didn't really read until a friend gave him a dozen Garfield comic books. Both children now read easily and with enjoyment (compared with many schooled children who hate reading because they were forced to do it).

The interest that Mara is showing in ceramics may be a big factor in widening her scope of interests and learning to try out new things that she enjoys. It shouldn't be seen as just a ceramics class. There is such potential for something like that to lead to many other interests and activities. This class itself is a big deal to her, a window into the world, instead of just one of many activities the parent thinks she should be doing.

Andrvea may not be able to convince her husband, but she has many allies through GWS. Learning is natural to children. It is their greatest joy. Play is a necessary, vital component of the learning process, and without it the joy of learning is lost. Development of the intellect occurs gradually and naturally through play. Some day science may discover the intricate process by which children, through play, prepare themselves to learn the various subjects deemed necessary to function in the world. Too many children have their preparation time short-circuited and lose most of the interest they had in learning.

Now, about the bond between Andrvea's 6 and 3 year olds. I believe their strong tie is a wonderful thing. When they are grown, their strong relationship will mean a lot to them (after secondary friendships come and go). My oldest son was very shy when he was young. He clung to me in unfamiliar surroundings and when people he didn't know came over. He and his sister, who are 16 months apart, played together most of the time. Somewhere around age 8 or 9, he became determined by himself to overcome his fear of the unknown, and now is able to greet new people easily and without struggle. I never pushed him into playing with other children or talking with strangers, so the victory is completely his. He now plays with boys and girls his own age, but as we live in the country and most of the kids he knows are in school, he plays a lot with his 5-year-old brother. They do some fighting but also have a lot of fun making up games and building Lego structures to support whatever they are imagining. My husband and I are overjoyed at their relationship. Despite the 6 year difference in age, what great memories they will have of each other! I also believe that my oldest son is learning just as much through their play as my youngest. He has grown more patient and understanding since his younger brother came into his life. You cannot quantify this kind of learning, but is there anything more important?

Watchers or Doers

From Nancy Friedland (CA):

In my years of working with young children, I noticed that many children followed a very consistent learning style of being either watchers or doers and that they demonstrate this alignment at a very early age (even babyhood). The watchers (my first child fits here) would observe an activity, watch a number of demonstrations by other children or their parent or the teacher, and then would 1) do it afterwards; 2) do it when they got home; 3) do it weeks later much to everyone's surprise. No amount of prodding and encouraging seems to budge these children and in fact only makes them hold their ground all the more. Often when they do finally do a task, they do it quite well, as if they have been mentally practicing all along. My daughter sat on her bike for about three years, sometimes pushing a little with her feet on the ground, but mostly just sitting, getting on and off, wheeling it around, or just looking at it and at other bikers. At age 8 she got on and rode almost effortlessly.

The doers (my second child fits here) seem to learn only by doing. You can't explain, you can't even take the time to demonstrate sometimes – they just need to do it, to learn it kinesthetically perhaps. And no matter how many times you tell these kids to do something a certain way, they only learn when they do it themselves. These children seem to end up with more bumps and bruises as they learn to walk, run, bike, etc. relatively undeterred by the falls and mishaps. My son only learns on the computer by operating it himself, not by reading about it or being told about it. And no matter how many times we ask him not to try this button or that program, he just has to get his hands on it to find out all about it and then he learns about how it works when the system crashes or he destroys a document.

I always found that children fit somewhere on a spectrum in this theory. Some are extremely one way or the other and there are children with varying degrees of both styles. I also found that a child's method usually matched up with one of the parents' methods of learning. The frustration

came when the parent of the opposite style was dealing with the child and was unaware of why the child might behave this way or was baffled at the child's seeming stubbornness. Or it was somehow different for the parent with the same style to watch his child learn by his own painful method.

It sounds like your family has an incredibly rich, varied, and active lifestyle. My 7 and 9 year olds also do a great many activities that they love, but my experience has been that they need a balance of time at home, time alone, and time with a parent. If we do not stay home two complete days a week, plus a number of half days, they are literally falling apart and object vehemently to any outing of any sort, except maybe going out for ice cream. It might be helpful for you to keep track of what your family does for about a month to get a larger view of how much Mara actually does. The most useful advice I've ever received, which Susannah Sheffer wrote a long time ago, is: don't look at what your child *isn't* doing, look at what she *is* doing, and you will be amazed.

A 14 Year Old Remembers

From Sarabeth Matilsky (NJ):

I am 14 years old and I've basically never been forced to learn anything. I've been unschooled all my life and I love it! As I read your letter I was moved to write immediately, because I saw many characteristics in your description of Mara that I possess (or have possessed) myself.

Actually, it's only just this last year and a half or so in which I've been able to do things like ask for information myself. When I was 6, I was very similar to Mara. I always wanted to play at my house and I was very shy. I also resisted (and still do resist) any regimented lessons. I think that everyone learns at a different rate and learns in different ways. My way is to wait until I get interested in something, and then I can sometimes spend a very long time working on it, and I don't get interrupted by having to move on to a different subject (which really messes up your train of thought!).

Also, if I had gone to school, I might have learned the same amount, but I feel sure that I would not possess the love of learning which is just as important as knowing something. Especially when kids are shy, it's very hard to be in the school situation. I would have been so scared!

You wrote about Bill not believing in creative play being valuable – nothing is farther from the truth! I have learned so much from games that I, my brother Jake, and occasionally my sister April have made up. (Also, who wants someone who can do the multiplication tables but can't imagine a fairy?)

Related to what I wrote before about learning, sometimes things just happen. I don't remember how I learned to read – I didn't work at it – but one day when I was 8, it just happened. I could read. With math, on the other hand, it's been more difficult. I never liked it very much, and right now I know multiplication and division and fractions, but I haven't really wanted to learn algebra. Mom's been very good about it, and both she and I know that when I want to, I'll learn it.

I have found other ways to learn things, too, than by textbooks. I am very involved in our local food co-op, and ever since I can remember, Mom took me with her to shop and work. When I was 9 I was allowed to work by myself. By working there, not only did I gain responsibility, but I learned a lot of math as well. Working on bulk herbs, I had to learn to average out prices. I learned to use the cash register. Non-members receive a 25% markup, yellow card members receive a 10% discount – all this required a certain amount of number knowledge, which I quickly learned. My newest job is marking up invoices from wholesale to retail and it involves a great amount of responsibility.

Sarabeth's mother, Ruth Matilsky, adds:

I always laugh when people say they wouldn't have the patience to teach their own children. When Sara was 7 she wanted reading lessons. I prepared them, but her idea of lessons was telling me what to do! At 9 I tried teaching her to sing and reduced her to tears. Today, at 14, I can be as criti-

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cal as I please with her writing and singing and she thrives on it. At 6 she wouldn't say hello to people she didn't know. Two weeks ago she traveled by herself to Virginia and passed the time on the train talking to her fellow passengers.

Mother of 18 Year Old Looks Back

A reader writes:

From the time she was born, my daughter (now 18) was an exceptionally peaceful and quiet child. As she grew older, we began to notice that she seemed to feel insecure around grandparents and other relatives. At six months she would cry if her grandmother tried to hold her. When we were in large gatherings, she would always stay close unless other children asked her to play. I remember her being very friendly toward other children and making friends easily, but she rarely spoke with adults and that included extended family. When we were in adult gatherings she usually sat on my lap the entire time and would not speak to anyone who approached her. But she was always observing and listening to everything that was going on, and oftentimes she would point things out to me that I had not even seen or heard.

There were many times when I just could not get her to participate. On one visit to the pediatrician when she was around 4, he wanted to test her vision and he asked her to look at a chart on the wall. Her response to each of his questions was just to stare straight ahead at the chart. Any encouragement I tried to provide was met with resistance. The same thing happened when I took her to a preschool testing. She refused to participate. Her refusal was always done very quietly. She never made a scene. She would just stand or sit wherever she happened to be and look at the person and make no response at all. I would never be angry at her, because I felt she had her reasons for not wanting to do these things and I knew she wasn't refusing out of stubbornness or contrariness. I think she really didn't like adults who were trying to test her to find out how much she knew.

The hardest thing for me was trying to deal with all the judgments the other adults were making about her. I think so many people over the years have assumed that she is not capable because she is so quiet, but nothing could be further from the truth. When she takes on a task, she does the very best job she can and she has proven her abilities time and time again.

She has always been eager to try new things as long as she is not being pressured. Over the years she has taken ice skating, gymnastics, dancing, art, piano, and flute lessons. She took several classes at a Kids to College program (typing, magic, oceanography). She, her brother, and I took two classes with a local naturalist. She has always loved physical activity (today she is walking 20 miles in our city's Walk for Hunger). Three years ago she decided she wanted to join the music program at the local high school. Besides being in the color guard, she plays flute in the concert band and has taken music history and theory classes. But I want to emphasize that she goes about all of this very quietly.

She does not like me or her father to help her with her studies. We were always met with great resistance. She developed her own way of learning cursive writing by taking letters written to us by friends and carefully tracing over each word with a pen. I wondered how this could possibly be useful since many of the letters were less than legible, but to my amazement she now has very neat handwriting.

Recently she decided she wanted to graduate through Clonlara's Home Based Education Program. She agreed to a tutor in algebra and to working with her father to improve her writing. She read all of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, plus several novels. She is currently working on her exit exam for Clonlara and she spends several hours each day doing research and writing papers, all with absolutely no interference from me or her dad.

It is difficult never to really know what she is thinking or feeling. She prefers to keep her thoughts to herself. This is in sharp contrast to her older brother who is very open and easy to talk to. But I try to accept that she is a private person, and I try not to pry into her life. It can be extremely frustrating to try and carry on a conversation and get only one word answers. At times she has opened up to me and shared something that was troubling her, but this is rare. When I'm feeling sad about this, I always remind myself of all her wonderful qualities. She is fiercely loyal and honest and deeply sensitive. She is the kindest person I've ever known.

I don't think we should worry because we have introspective, shy, quiet children. I believe they will find their place in the world and be successful in their own way. I encourage my daughter but I never force her to do something. She really caught me by surprise last fall when she told me she was thinking of giving a speech at the school's music banquet, in front of 100 people! The kids at school were very kind and told her if she was too shy to do it, they would do it for her. My first reaction was to try to protect her and talk her out of it, but before I said anything I realized that what I needed to do for *her* was to encourage her and instill confidence in her ability to do this, while at the same time letting her know that if she decided not to do it, that was OK too. She did give the speech, even though she was so nervous she says she can't remember it. Others have told me that she did a wonderful job.

I think we have to trust that our children will come out all right. I think they have an inner guidance or intuition about what is right for them.

Shy But Happy

From Cindy Taska (VT):

I was a very shy, quiet, observant person as a child, dreading being the center of attention. I can remember clearly how it felt to be so shy and how angry and scared I'd feel if anyone tried to push me into something I wasn't ready for (like talking in front of a class or going up to a boy and asking him to dance). I always felt the best and learned the most when I was in small, familiar groups. I always preferred to play alone with one friend and especially to spend time alone with my sister. I have two

younger sisters, and I spent most of my childhood years, up to age 11, playing with the sister who was two years younger than me. Then I spent my preadolescent and teenage years with my best friend or my youngest sister. I still consider my two sisters my best friends (aside from my husband).

I'm telling you all this because Mara reminded me a lot of myself. I was a shy but happy kid. I did well in school but I was late in learning a lot of things (walking, swimming, riding a bike). I thought of myself later as a late bloomer. Now, in looking back at my childhood, I can see that I was developing in the ways that I am strong now: I'm a good listener, facilitator, observer, questioner, and have no trouble forming lasting, intimate friendships. I have enjoyed jobs and lifestyle choices that fit with my strengths.

I would imagine for Mara that her quiet, attentive, caring personality will have an easy time finding its own niche later on. Her ego may seem fragile to you now, as her mother, but it sounds to me like she often has a strong sense of what she wants and doesn't want. You really need to trust that she'll do fine.

I think it's helpful for a shy kid not to be pushed at all but to be exposed *gently* to new things. It helps for a shy kid to spend time with quiet, sensitive adults (like Mara's ceramics teacher). Unfortunately, in school a shy kid can be put in horrible situations with nasty, or maybe just pushy, teachers. I agree with you that at home you can protect Mara from a lot of hurt she'd suffer at school.

Even though I was shy and scared as a kid (when put in situations that I wasn't ready for), I feel that I've turned out fine. It helped that I wasn't pushed much by my parents. I learned so much from my sibling relationships, and, like Mara, I was very curious and attentive about what interested me.

When Parents Disagree

From Julie Scandora (WA):

After three years my husband is still not won over to homeschooling, but he's at least no longer adamantly opposed. He has seen that despite no formal instruction our children do learn through their own efforts; he realizes that despite not being with peers most school days, they are socially mature and quite happy; he knows they both enjoy and benefit from their unschooling.

But like Andrvea's husband, mine wonders, "Are the children learning what they should? How do they compare with their schooled peers? How will they make it in the real world?"

I believe what is crucial is understanding the hidden agenda. For us it is that my husband has a certain perception of the world, and all the propaganda in favor of homeschooling will not alter that perception. He has a great need to feel secure. A stable job and income are necessary, and those come only through the traditional channel of schooling, including college. Any other route is too risky and will inevitably result in failure. Such was the way impressed upon him and it is extremely hard for him to imagine making a living otherwise. Because he can't imagine it for himself, he has a difficult time imagining that his children will "make it" in another way. I must add that all three children (6, 9, 11) earn money outside the home and are very conscientious in their work. They provide no reasons for him to believe they cannot cope. Instead the problem is with his perceptions and beliefs.

Despite my husband's discomfort with unschooling, he allows us to continue. He has basically removed himself from this issue, preferring to defer to me rather than to make waves. The children realize we have these differences in learning philosophies, but they also know that the responsibility for their learning falls mainly to me (because I let them learn on their own). It is not ideal, but it is as close to unified as we can be for now. My hope is that with more time his perceptions will change as he continues to see how his children cope successfully with life. But I realize such change will be gradual.

In the meantime I believe my major role is that of supporter of the children. I am unwavering in trusting them. I must be if my husband is uncertain. Andrvea indicates that she is having doubts about unschooling because of her husband's doubts. But you can't say to children that you'll unschool them only if their learning is on par with that of schooled peers. That's neither unschooling nor showing confidence in the child. I would suggest rereading those books that initially set Andrvea on unschooling, and GWS issues are invaluable in that they consistently tell, from both the parents' and children's viewpoints, how trusting the child cannot fail.

Close Siblings

From Judith Musco (MA):

When our family gets overloaded with outside commitments, we all feel overwhelmed and disconnected from each other. Mara will let you know when she needs more social interaction with others outside the family. Right now she is finding her inspiration and delight within her family and home.

My daughter and son thoroughly enjoy each other's company and they are together almost every day, all day long. They are *my* personal role models for what I think friends should be. They are patient, understanding, they listen to each other, offer advice, help out with problems, and care very deeply for one another. All this is true even though they have very different personalities and temperaments.

By being at home and working out daily conflicts within the family, our children are in a microcosm of society: different ages working together. But our microcosm is based on love. When our children move out into the world, they'll be experienced at looking at life more openly than their peers at school who are encouraged to look at life through ageism blinders. Children in school get to know kids their own age and either look down on young kids or idolize older kids.

Modeled after their own sibling relationships, new relationships should bring much joy to our children who have grown up in a loving family. As teenagers now, my children are each other's best friends but yet they confidently go off in different directions for 2-4 weeks each summer. They write to each other but also meet new friends.

How Adults Learn

To us, lifelong learning doesn't mean lifelong schooling; it means continuing to learn new things and develop new interests as adults.

Studying French

Susan Whetzel of Maryland writes:

It's been interesting to read the articles in GWS concerning learning another language. I've been relearning French (I took it in high school) in the past three years, and I have some information that may be helpful.

I had been looking for a French correspondent without any luck until I discovered some newspapers. One is called *Journal Francais d'Amérique*. It is published in America for Francophiles. Its sister paper is called *France USA Contacts* and is published in Paris for French people seeking American information and contacts. I placed a classified ad in that paper that read: "40-year-old mother seeks correspondence with French-speaking person." I got 11 responses! Some people never wrote a second time but I now have six regular French correspondents. I've never read or written so much French in my life. I like the challenge and I like meeting and getting to know French people.

Also, I've discovered some foreign book services. They have a variety of books, some very easy to read: Schoenhofs, 76A Mt Auburn St, Cambridge MA 02138 and La Cité, 2306 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90064.

And don't forget foreign films with subtitles. If you rent them, you can watch as many times as you need to. The spoken language is usually different from the written, so it's good to hear real people talk.

Overcoming Fear of Art

Cheryle Duncan (MO) wrote in The Balcony Press, *a newsletter that she and another homeschooling mother have begun publishing:*

I used to be very intimidated by art and anything related to it – artists (past and present), styles, art terms, museums, etc. My children's school presented an opportunity for me to become an art docent, which is someone who knows nothing or very little about art but teaches it by reading prepared material on what to say and how to demonstrate it, and then presents it to others. My first reaction was, "I'd really like to help, but what if I fail?" As my hands sweat and my stomach was full of butterflies, I told myself, "I'm not the kind of person who can do something like this!" But volunteers were badly needed and it would be such a great experience for the classrooms who would otherwise have no exposure to art that I very hesitantly agreed to do it.

During my first lesson, I stood in front of my son's third grade art class trembling and sweating, my heart pounding, my voice quivering, my mouth feeling full of cotton, and the faces in front of me a grey blur. At the end of that first hour and a half, I hurried to my car, slumped behind the steering wheel and felt drained. But, I had done it. I hadn't done a great job, but I had done it. And I hadn't even thrown up or had a heart attack!

I wasn't very excited about going back again for next month's lesson, but I wasn't completely dreading it either because the worst of it was over – the fear of the unknown. Now I knew what to expect, what was expected of me, how to do it, and how possibly to do it better next time. Each month the experience grew less and less traumatic and eventually I actually began to look forward to it. Not only had I proven to myself that I could be an art docent, but I was learning about art in the process. I began to see that all of that "art stuff" that I had feared wasn't so intimidating after all. It was just an area that I didn't know much about and had limited myself about due to fear. Because I just jumped in and did it, despite the fear, I began to feel somewhat comfortable in an area that I had previously thought only some expert could do, *and* I was learning and becoming familiar with a subject that I had always considered mysterious and too above me.

I've had many similar experiences since then, equally frightening and gut-wrenching. But I'm getting better all the time at being able to recognize those anxious feelings and *use* them as a sign to dive into what I'm afraid of instead of letting them take over and make me hide.

Learning to recognize my fears and use them to my advantage has helped me immensely in homeschooling. Although we moved to this area only a year ago, we are getting to know people, the area, places of interest, and getting familiar with different curriculums, getting to know lots of different types of people (not *just* the ones we always feel the most comfortable with), and finding out about all the vast opportunities that Missouri has to offer us. We are becoming braver and more comfortable about jumping in and asking questions, trying things out even though they may sound like something we might not be that interested in. Sometimes when we try something, we decide we would rather not have gone, but most of the time we are pleasantly surprised, and nearly always we learn something that will help us in the future.

This new attitude and ability didn't just happen to me. It began for me and my family when I read the book *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* by Susan Jeffers. This book helped me make very positive changes in myself in ways that also inadvertently affected others around me, and I highly recommend it to anyone else who wants to do the same.

Learning About Homeschooling

Tara Tieso-Battis (MN) writes:

In many ways homeschooling now seems like a natural outgrowth of our parenting style, which has always tended to be a little outside the mainstream – nursing a child who joined the family through adoption, family bed, one parent at home. I think I always felt that there was something

not quite right for me about sending kids to school, although I enjoyed much of school myself. But it wasn't until we began to consider preschools that I began to consider homeschooling seriously.

I have read quite a bit of Rudolf Steiner and am fairly enamored of the Waldorf approach, with a couple of notable exceptions. It was these exceptions that convinced me that homeschooling offered us the right combination – socially, philosophically, academically. The major problems I had with the Waldorf schools I visited were a predominantly white staff and student body, a significant lack of multicultural perspective and gender equity, a fairly narrow set of expectations and a fairly rigid structure (in the guise of a very non-structured environment). I should qualify this by saying that this was true of the Waldorf schools I visited in my area, and is very likely not true of every Waldorf school.

I'm also the kind of person who researches things well in advance, so we were doing lots of reading about homeschooling, talking with homeschooling families, *and* taking a look at the public kindergarten programs as well. Our experiences at the public schools' information fairs were a big turning point in our decision-making as well.

We visited one school's info table. It was a "world cultures" magnet school, and the kindergarten teacher regaled me with an enthusiastic description of one of their "learning opportunities" - Sombrero Day. She explained, and illustrated with photos, how the kids wore sombreros and ate tortillas on that day. On another day the kids wore their pajamas to "look Japanese." To me, the whole thing was not just shallow but disrespectful and lacking in both fact and imagination.

At another school's table, a smiling vice-principal took one look at my brown-skinned son and said, "Oh, he's adorable, you folks will be interested in hearing about our Chapter One program!" (For kids who need remedial and other special help.) The labeling appalled me.

For my husband, the decision to homeschool was a much tougher sell. The event that clinched it for him was attending a workshop with John Taylor Gatto. He walked in the door that night and said, "I have a new mission in life."

I was quite surprised at the enormous feeling of relief I felt when we really decided to homeschool, considering our son is not school-age yet. And I quickly began to realize that I had previously been holding something back in my parenting, quite unconsciously. I don't know if I felt as though there were certain things I shouldn't be doing with my son, because they were reserved for teachers and school, but making the decision to homeschool gave me an incredible feeling of freedom. I'm quite sure part of my holding back was also an attempt to lessen the pain I anticipated would accompany the loss of my child to the school system, a loss many of my friends who have kids in school have so poignantly shared with me.

The other result of homeschooling has been the wonderful sense of community we've gained from other homeschoolers. We're enjoying our involvement with our local homeschooling support organization and with other homeschooling families immensely.

And from Laura Bruner of Illinois:

My husband and I have always leaned toward the unconventional side of things. Before our son was born, we were anticipating building a small sailboat to live aboard while adventuring near and not-so-near waters. Our son is now 3, and no such craft has been built. But I will say this: we have come a long way toward recognizing what it is we really wanted out of that dream.

When we were planning to bring our son along with us on our boat, we knew it would be necessary to have some kind of bring-along school. That is what started my quest for homeschooling information. The more and more I read, the more I began to love the idea. At some point I began to get sad at the thought of us not possibly sailing away as a family. That is when I knew this was something I wanted to do, no matter if we were on the water or on land. But the reality of homeschooling here, and not at some distant port, was that we wouldn't be like our neighbors.

I can't recall there being a transition period between our dreaming about homeschooling and actually claiming to do it. Since Zach is 3, we didn't have to pull him out of school or purchase a curriculum. I guess I just started reaching for available resources.

While going public with homeschooling, I have noticed that the hardest critics are family members (my parents) and friends. I have learned a lesson in not setting any expectations for others. I just assumed that my parents and close friends would help support me and my decisions. I have not dismissed any friendships over this, but I have taken a hard look at why some people are so bitter towards homeschooling. Perhaps it is because they wish they had done the same thing with their children.

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Watching Children Learn

Deciding to Work on Math

Julie Scandora (WA) writes:

It's amazing how one year of forced learning can undo previous years of learning in a free environment. My middle child was in a Montessori preschool/kindergarten for three years, where she was free to choose her work/play. Upon entering another Montessori school for first grade, she was forced to devote a certain amount of time each day to each of several subjects. Gradually, her enthusiasm for all subjects dropped. She no longer wrote stories, no longer cared much for reading (hated going to the library), had no interest in spelling, and began to despise math. The only subject in which she retained any interest was art – possibly because the busy school schedule rarely had time for it and never required work in it.

For second grade, Rikki began homeschooling, and her enthusiasm for learning returned. However, bad memories of forced math must have been strong because for two years she refused to have anything to do with the subject.

She finally decided to work on math when she encountered situations in which math was required for coping and she realized she was not capable. Specifically, in playing Monopoly with friends, she, unlike the other players, could not calculate transactions. Also, she began earning money outside the home and purchasing items, so she saw the need for being able to calculate.

Once Rikki saw both how math was needed in her life and how deficient she was, she took action. She asked me to give her increasingly more math problems each day. She also began silently memorizing addition facts while lying in bed morning and night. (She told me about that only much later.) And so it continues. I give her math exercises only when she requests them and I suspect she requests them only when she needs them. In the process she has discovered that math can be fun because she's in control of her learning, and she sees the results (competency) of her learning.

Top Ten Reasons

Emma Root of Massachusetts writes:

A typical day in our homestudy program: leisurely breakfast while discussing what should get done today; we agree to abide by the chosen math assignments, Latin, and writing. (I work two hours a week listing goals, a.k.a. assignments, in history, science, algebra, math, composition, literature, crafts, and also listing all the outside commitments – Hebrew classes, piano lesson, swimming lessons, etc.). While eating, 10-year-old Victoria starts a list of good reasons for homeschooling and I suggest she type up all the reasons on the computer. Within an hour we have polished off a poster for posting on our public library bulletin board. We discussed how to organize her ten good reasons and what to do with the eleventh (we called it a "bonus"). I showed her some tricks for combining clauses so the reader's attention is kept on the main issues. Tory finished the poster with art work.

Then on to changing one or two sentences in the book review she had previously written. How did this come about? We went to a book signing at a nearby bookstore and met the author. He was taken with Tory's quick humor and her interest in his work, and the store's liaison boasted of her homestudy program (she admires our frequent forays into the store at all hours of school days). We ended up promising a child-authored book review and a list of homeschooling organizations. The review became an excellent chance for Tory to write to an unknown audience, focusing on communicating her enthusiasm for the book.

Well, that rather finished the need for a composition assignment. On another day we will focus on essays or research papers.

Then, back to work with two pages from a seventh grade math workbook to confirm that Tory understands dividing with decimals (99% correct) and a page from an algebra workbook (skipping several pages which would be tedious repetition). For the first time in this astonishing New England winter it is 60 degrees outside, so I agree that Tory can go out for forty minutes of free time before lunch, Latin, and piano practice.

What prompts this letter is a train of thought Tory and I have been sharing this past week as we get ready for the Iowa assessment tests that our school board requires (Tory enjoys the challenge of the tests; last year's disappointing performance on mathematical computations challenged her to master all of the arithmetic tables, etc. Now she is solving algebraic equations, the struggle for mastery of arithmetic being past.). We sometimes both wonder at her ready progress. In an excellent article in *Technology Review*, "How Schools are Shortchanging the Gifted," Sally M. Reis mentions the need to "compact" the curriculum, eliminating the tedious repetition and review that bores, and indeed can deaden, a quick learner. I'm not sure this does not also apply to "ordinary" children as well. Perhaps "gifted" should be considered "gifted and lucky"! That is the thought that prompted Tory to list the academic good reasons for homestudy.

From Tory's list:

10 Reasons for Homestudy:

1. You can study at your own pace. This includes learning much more than there would be time for in school.

2. You and your tutor can compact the curriculum – skip things you know well, go beyond dumb repetition. You can choose your own school books.

3. You have much more free time! Schoolwork gets done fast when there is no bureaucracy!

4. You have the energy for classes after school (dance, piano, horseback riding, art, etc.).

5. You can use any day for a field trip (you don't have to join the Saturday crowds). And you can choose where to go and when to dally!

6. You don't have to wake up early in the morning. That means you can stay up later at night and finish a good book or watch an interesting Discovery Channel program.

7. You never have to run to catch the school bus.

8. You don't have to put up with teasing or cliques.

9. You don't have to worry about bringing lunch or books or homework.

10. You have fewer deadlines (like get this done in a half hour or hour and so on).

Bonus: You don't get sick as often because you aren't in contact with half-sick kids very much.

Interested in learning more? Already in a homestudy program and want to get together? Call Emma (parent) or Victoria (happy home student) at [phone number], afternoons or evenings.

What are others' top ten reasons for homeschooling? Has anyone else tried posting up such a list or notice in a public place?

Healthier Socialization

Carol Morley (NY) writes:

By the end of eighth grade, our son Thomas had endured nine years in the public schools. He was becoming increasingly surly, detached, and uncaring about school – becoming, in fact, what he had for so long been told he was: defiant, oppositional, disruptive, lazy, and lacking control. He was also bullied by other kids, having panic attacks, unable to sleep, losing weight, friendless, alone, and scared. He was defeated.

I must mention here that Thomas was never deliberately obnoxious or rude. He was not going out of his way to make trouble for himself; on the contrary, he desperately wanted to do well and tried very hard to behave acceptably in and out of school. He was simply not able to do it. Nor was I ever a "not *my* child" type of parent; I was well aware of how exasperating, even infuriating, dealing with Tom could be. Tom's problems stemmed from an inability to filter out distractions and focus attention on the task at hand. While attention deficit may have caused his problems, it was compounded by the fact that it was not recognized until very recently and that, up until then, the stress of not understanding why others became so angry at him was taking a severe emotional toll.

Then, there is the reality of what socialization in public schools actually is. Today it includes having to deal with guns, violence, drugs, questionable sex education practices, out of control students, and, in some cases, teachers, all taking place in an environment devoid of morality. Parents, pushed to the side, are no longer the pivotal role models they should be for their children. That position has been taken over by the system and those in it, reluctantly. Add this to the mix being fed to an already bewildered kid, and the result is, *has* to be, disaster.

Our daughter, seven years Tom's senior, had successfully completed her secondary education in these very same institutions. However, the deterioration which had taken place within the schools during those years was appalling. The situation had become overwhelming for Tom. We were dismayed too, and desperate for help. None was forthcoming, despite our pleas.

Last year Tom began to be associated with the so-called troublemakers in school. Since he was presumed to be one of them, he *became*

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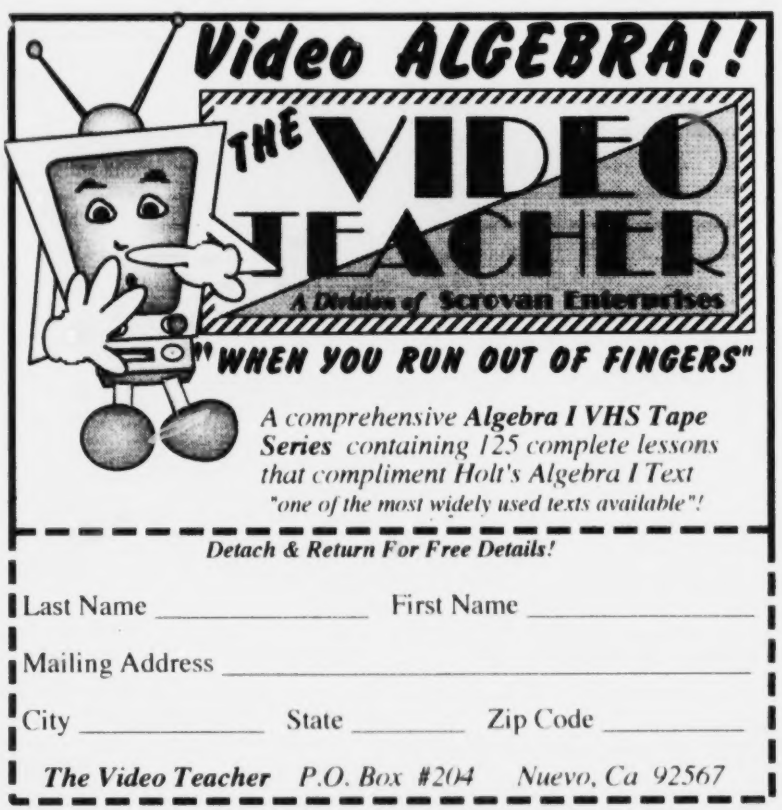
one of them, or at least he tried. He found good qualities in all of these kids, and he persisted in defending them when he felt they were wronged, sometimes even to his own detriment. This is one of his strengths, as I see it; unfortunately, others were not of the same opinion. He was suspended from school frequently. Most teachers wanted nothing to do with him; some even told him not to bother to show up in class. I received calls every day from teachers informing me of Tom's negative attitude and behavior. My husband and I were invited in frequently to hear the guidance counselor, the dean of students, the principal, or all of the above, recite to us a litany of our son's failings. And he was failing – everything.

At this point, in May 1993, we pulled Tom out of school. We began to homeschool using his textbooks, continuing where he had left off. The change was immediate and dramatic. He was free; he was in some kind of control. He was eating and sleeping, the panic attacks and dark circles under his eyes began to disappear, and he started to learn again in a way that I haven't seen him do since nursery school. We had our son back.

And, he began socializing, honestly, for the first time in his life. When a child is not forced into an artificial, institutional setting where he encounters only people his own age who know as little as, or less than, he does in the area of human interaction; when he is not labeled and assigned to a group of others similarly categorized; when he is no longer obliged to befriend those whom unconcerned adults have chosen for him; when he knows, unequivocally, that he is a unique individual of inestimable worth capable of making his own best choices, he can, as Tom has, become quite socially adept. Tom's self-confidence has increased, he has developed the ability to cope with all kinds of personalities, and, as always, he accepts each friend for what he is and finds something admirable in all. His friends now range in age from 10 to adult. They are working people, electronic whizzes, CB aficionados, skate boarders, BMXers, Karate students, and others who share common interests with him. We live near the high school with a shopping center close by where Tom meets many students each day at lunchtime or after school. He takes Karate lessons three times a week, communicates via modem and CB, participates in skate boarding practices and informal competitions, invites other boys over for gym workouts, and visits back and forth with neighborhood friends and other homeschoolers. No, he is not perfect. Neither are we. The road is not always smooth and easy; indeed, there's a long way to go to repair the damage Tom has incurred. But at least *this* road is not land mined.

I am convinced that, had we continued on with the public school system, we would have had a young man on our hands who, in spite of all our best efforts, would have become in one way or another a victim of that system. He would have become anti-social. Now, I am sure, he will simply continue to become Tom – all that *he* chooses to be. My answer to the socialization question, then, is Tom himself.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Interested in Marine Biology

From Daisy Cross of California:

I became interested in whales and other sea animals because I just liked thinking about them. One night, my family and I went to a Mexican restaurant for dinner. I saw fish on the menu. I asked my dad what a person who studied marine life was called. He told me they are called marine biologists. So I said, "I'm going to be a marine biologist when I grow up."

A couple of weeks later, we found an article in a magazine about a school that was doing a project on saving the manatees. At the bottom of the page was the address for the Save the Manatee Club. I had already fallen in love with manatees when I saw a photo of one. So I wanted to enter the club. I got a big pile of books together and found out a lot about manatees. I have got a whole project going for the summer on manatees. I want others to join this great club, and I made up a flyer that gives information about manatees and then says, "Manatees are among the most harmless animals that

ever lived. But they are being killed off by motor boat propellers and lack of habitat and therefore are on the endangered species list. But you can help them survive by contacting Save the Manatee Club, 500 N. Maitland Ave, Maitland FL 32751."

Walking Together — And Learning

Mary Beth Nelson wrote in the May/June issue of Hearth Notes, *the newsletter of the Connecticut Home Educators Association:*

Christian, my 8-year-old son, recently began joining me on my early morning walks. ... At times we walk alone together, each with our own private thoughts. Then he suddenly slips his hand into mine and tells me about how his friend Craig still has asthma but can run better now, and does he still have Drama on Saturday, so wouldn't it be better if Craig came over in the morning, and how much tax is there on a dollar, anyway? "Six cents," I reply. He asks if he can borrow six cents. I tell him yes, Craig can come over Saturday morning, and ask him where he plans to spend a dollar. Apparently he has designs on a muffin at a deli in the center of town. A few silent minutes later, he announces that the tax on $1000 is $60. "But what about $10?" he inquires. I consider doing the "teacher" thing and asking him what he thinks. But he's asking me something he really needs to know. So instead of obfuscating, I answer his question. "Sixty cents." His head comes up and he grins, "Oh, now I get it! So it's $6 for $100! Yeah!" I'm glad I resisted the urge to play teacher.

... We finally make it to town. When we walk into our regular deli to get my coffee and his hot chocolate, the lady at the counter greets us cheerfully and suggests that Christian handle the payment and figure out the change. She gets a kick out of the fact that we homeschoolers learn things by doing them, and loves to play her part. Christian, however, does not like feeling like a laboratory rat, so he politely declines to "perform." (His sister, on the other hand, loves to show off what homeschoolers can do.)...

Queries

Maryann Roth of Pennsylvania writes:

I am trying to find out about homeschooling and foster children. Is there anyone who has ever done it or even looked into it? Is there anyone who could tell me about homeschooling your natural children while sending your foster children to public school? Our foster agency has told me that it is against their policy to allow foster children to be homeschooled.

Our foster children have been in care for a long time and are expected to remain in care until they are adults. Because they have to be in school, I feel obliged to be somewhat involved in school activities so that they don't feel abandoned to the system. But I am having a very difficult time participating in activities I don't approve of. I also don't know what to do when they ask for help with homework assignments that I feel are taking up the time they could use to actually learn something.

From Kim Wilson (PA):

I've recently decided to enroll in a master's degree program for a Master of divinity in liberal religion (Unitarian/Universalist) and I'm trying to figure out how to juggle taking two or three courses a semester with homeschooling my kids. For the next six years, I'll probably be taking classes three half days per week and studying a couple of hours every evening. Right now, Rosalie (4) and Jaimie (almost 1) go to a wonderful sitter two mornings a week, but I wonder what the alternatives will be when they're older. Has anyone homeschooled while going to school themselves?

I'd also like to hear from anyone who is a minister (especially a woman) who has successfully combined ministry with homeschooling. It's possible that I will have a parish ministry but more likely that I will work as a community minister, perhaps through a social service agency.

Parents, Are You Looking For An Educational Alternative?

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Focus

Quitting Activities

For this issue's Focus, we asked young GWS readers to tell us about quitting activities – either organized activities like classes or lessons, or activities they did independently. We asked why they quit, if they ever went back to the activity or thought they might, and how they thought parents should respond when a child wants to quit something.

Taking a Break from Stained Glass Work

From Alex Huffman (CO):

When I want to make changes in my activities, I talk to my parents and we make a decision together that makes us all feel comfortable. My parents never dictate to me. They trust me to make decisions on my own.

I have been taking stained glass classes for about two years now. I stopped for almost six months last year because I got tired and needed a break. I waited long enough to get my interest back, and the project I did when I went back to the class was the biggest one I have done so far, and was put into a frame. My teacher says it is my best work so far. I feel the break was good for me because I probably would have burned out on stained glass work if I hadn't rested.

A lot of adults think that their children should always do the thing that they (the parents) think they should do, and not stop until they are told they can quit. I think this is wrong because it doesn't allow children to make their own decisions. For example, if my parents had not agreed to let me take a break from stained glass, I probably would have completely lost interest in the activity. Instead, they let me choose for myself.

Parents need to talk to their children about why they want to quit an activity or class. Sometimes the reasons aren't easy to explain. But it's important to talk about what the children are feeling. Sometimes the kids don't want to quit and just want some encouragement to continue. Other times, they really want to quit but they might be a little afraid to tell their parents.

Lots of adults think that they can quit things they are doing but their children can't. I think that's wrong, because it's hypocritical. That makes the children lose confidence in their parents and other adults.

Kids and teachers in schools don't have much freedom of choice. Their activities are mostly decided for them. But in homeschooling, our freedom of choice lets kids and adults start and stop activities without being rejected or punished.

Stopped Ballet Lessons

From Lianna Tennal (AR):

About two years ago I stopped taking ballet lessons, which I had been taking for three years. There were many reasons I stopped. I did not get along very well with the instructor, although I really like him very much and think he is a good instructor. In ballet class, especially during the last year I took lessons, we did not seem to get along. Also, I felt like I wanted to try something new, and I did not feel like ballet was something I particularly wanted to pursue further. My sister Laura, who had been taking ballet with me, also dropped out at this time.

Over the summer we took a break from any class activities, and the next fall Laura enrolled in gymnastics and I began taking classes in Tai Chi. Laura was having a wonderful time in gymnastics. She became good at it very fast.

The next summer, we again took a break from class activities. Over the summer my sister began to miss ballet class. That fall she decided to go back to it. I did not take

any classes that year except for my private guitar lessons which I have taken for the past two and a half years and can't imagine stopping.

Since my sister began taking ballet again, she is always talking about ballet class and practicing ballet all over the house. She says that she never wants to stop taking lessons again.

I don't think parents should try to keep their children from stopping an activity that the kids do not want to do anymore. My parents were disappointed that I wanted to quit ballet, but they did not try to stop me from doing so. Of course, I had known I wanted to stop for three or for months before I did, but I had waited until the end of the semester, so they were prepared for my quitting.

My parents were more disappointed about Laura quitting ballet than they were about me. Laura was better at it than I was, and even when she was little she had loved ballet and talked about perhaps becoming a ballet dancer when she got older.

I don't think I will ever go back to ballet, but I don't regret taking it for three years. There were times when I had fun and when I learned a lot. It just wasn't what I wanted to keep doing.

Gymnastics Wasn't Fun Anymore

From Vanessa Filkins (NY):

Ever since I was 3, I've been interested in gymnasts and in the entire sport. I would watch all the professionals on TV and think to myself, "I want to be like that!" My parents were glad their daughter had picked a "safe" sport and therefore encouraged me in my quest for balance, speed, and a limber body.

From that point on, I knew that I could and would excel in gymnastics when I got older. Sure enough, over the years I learned quickly. When I was almost 10, a man at my church found out about my love for gymnastics, and as he taught gymnastics himself, he offered to give me free lessons.

Then, as I turned 11 and started to get into more advanced moves and routines, I got less and less self-confident. I would go to meets and fall off the beam on the simplest moves and foul up on things that were easy for me regularly. Because I would make these mistakes, my coach became increasingly impatient, yelling and being frustrated. He thought it was impossible to teach someone without yelling and pushing them to their limit, which I don't agree with at all. I was also somewhat of a perfectionist, and the fact that I wasn't living up to my potential bothered me.

Shortly after my 12th birthday I wrote my coach a letter thanking him for all the years he had given me free instruction and saying that I thought I should go on to something else. My parents were very supportive during this time, and I think when children quit something, parents should respect their decision and not pressure them to go back to it. I asked my parents to give me advice, and they said they knew how much I loved gymnastics, but if I wanted to stop they would respect me for my decision.

Looking back now, I know I made the right and good decision, although at the time, I wasn't too sure about that. Back then, I went back through the years in my head, and thought about when the thing I wanted most was to fly through the air like Mary Lou Retton. When I thought about that, I realized how hard it was for me to leave, as my dream had always been to get to this high point in gymnastics. But then I sat back and asked myself these three questions: Was I leaving to rebel against others? Was this in the best interest of myself and my family? Was I really interested in gymnastics now? I thought about these questions for a while, and I decided that no, I wasn't quitting to rebel against others, I was doing it because I wasn't interested in pursuing gymnastics anymore. I knew two girls in my class who quit just to make their parents upset, because they hadn't wanted to do gymnastics in the first place – their parents had wanted them to. But I thought about it and realized that I was quitting because *I* wanted to quit, so I decided that that was a good reason.

I did think about how a lot of people would say, "Why couldn't she just stick with it?" But my point of view was that I had started gymnastics because I enjoyed it, because it was fun. I was never very interested in competing. So when it stopped being fun for me, I felt I should quit. I don't want to sound spoiled, or as if I never stick with anything when it gets hard. I absolutely hate math, for example, but I do it every day and keep pressing on with it. Sometimes it's important to stick with things, but I didn't think gymnastics was essential.

I probably won't go back to gymnastics, but I might try diving. My limberness would help out with that. And even though I don't do gymnastics competitively anymore, if you drive by my house on a warm summer day, you just might happen to see me doing cartwheels in the driveway.

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Katy Lau at art class

Leaving Art Class, and Returning Again

From Katy Inouye Lau (HI):

I stopped art class partly because I went on a trip while the class was still meeting and partly because I didn't have enough ideas. In this art class my teacher had all sorts of materials and you got to pick what to do. So ideas were very important. The teacher was fine, the class was fine, but I was running dry on ideas (not inspired). While I wasn't going to art class, I kept drawing with my friend and by myself, and I painted with tempera.

I didn't understand at the time why I wanted to stop the class, but later I did understand it.

I went back to the class because I was reading a book about papier-mache and it reminded me of my art class, and I missed it. My mom asked me if I wanted to go back and I said yes (art is my passion!). It's been almost a year since I stopped going and I started again about a month ago.

I think taking a break lets you look back on the activity and see what you can do to make it more fun. For example, in art it helps to take a break because you can get ideas about what to make or do next. In swimming, you can look back and say, "Well, I didn't like this part of swim class," and maybe you can find a class you do like.

Each person has a different reason for quitting or taking a break. Stopping is not quitting completely until you look back and say, "Well, I don't want to do that anymore." That's quitting, but you can always go back and do it again.

When I started taking gymnastics, for example, I was taking lessons at the YMCA. I stopped then because they didn't have any classes above that level. I don't remember clearly why I didn't take another class after that for a while. Last June I started another gymnastics class. I liked it for eight months but then we had to do a competition. I don't like competitions, and it would last a lot longer than the regular hours. And as my mom said, I'd only be doing my routine for a few seconds or a minute. That's why I quit. I don't know if I will ever go back to gymnastics.

When I was 5, before I started the art classes I'm in now, I was in another art class. My mom called up to see if it was a nice teacher and if it was not a "do this, do that" type of art class. It might be OK for a kid who goes to school, but not for me. It seemed quite confining to me. As an example, once the teacher said, "You may draw something on this table." I did not like that because I wanted to draw something I felt like drawing, not something on the table. As another example, once I drew an octopus with straight tentacles, and one of the teachers said, "Well, octopi don't have their tentacles straight out." I felt hurt. There were a lot of other things like that, but I knew I never wanted to stop art itself. It's just that I didn't like that class.

If a child wants to stop an activity, I don't think a parent should ever say, "You should keep on doing it." If my mom had told me I had to keep on doing gymnastics, it wouldn't have helped my not wanting to go. Sometimes parents can think, "If I tell my kid to go, they will go." Even if that is the case, the child should not be forced to go if he or she does not want to. You should ask the questions, "Are you sure you want to stop? Why do you want to stop?" when the child and you are in a "high mood." If you ask the kid when he or she is in a "low mood," you can sometimes get low-mood answers. A low mood answer is sometimes the first angry thing that pops into a person's head about a subject. You're more likely to get a truer answer if the child is in a high mood. *You* must be in a high mood too because if the child is feeling negatively about going to the activity and says, "No, I never want to see that place again," you might take it personally and get upset and never understand the real reason he or she never wants to go back.

A Break From Music Lessons

From Nathan Westheimer (OH):

I took saxophone lessons for about three months, and then I decided I needed a break. I was given too much to work on in one week. I remember asking Steve, the teacher, to give me less to work on, but it didn't change. He probably didn't change because when he gave me less to do, I did it so well. He thought I could handle the challenge of more work.

I asked my parents if it would be OK for me to stop taking lessons. I just said I wanted to take a break, and they said OK. They didn't really question me at the time. It was only when I started writing this that we talked about why I had wanted to stop. I continued playing sax with our family band even though I took a break from lessons. I could fit more things into my life when I stopped lessons because my parents didn't require me to practice every day anymore.

Now, almost one year later, I am ready to start lessons again. To enjoy my lessons with Steve in the future I will

need to communicate honestly about what I want to work on. It's important for me to be in control of my lessons. I think I will be able to tell Steve what I want, because I've gotten to know him better. He also teaches guitar, and he's been coming over to give guitar lessons to my brother, so I've had a chance to get to know him.

I think parents should let their kids stop lessons when they want to if they have a good reason.

Feeling Uncomfortable with a Teacher

From Mona Weiner (NY):

I love to write. I write poems, stories, and plays. I've written one book and am in the middle of writing another. So when I found out that I could take a playwriting class, I decided to do it. My first teacher, after teaching for two weeks, decided that he was too busy, so he asked someone else to teach: Kate. Kate was nice. *Too* nice. She asked me tons of questions. Once she asked what I had done over the weekend. I told her I had slept over at my friend's house. She asked me if I gossiped. I sort of said yes. Then she asked me what we gossiped about. I don't remember how I got out of that, but I did not answer. I told my mother about Kate's questions while I was walking home, and she got mad. She told me I did not have to answer any questions I did not want to answer.

Another time, I was doodling on the paper on which I was prepared to take notes, Kate asked me, out of the blue, right in the middle of discussing what was wrong with the latest draft of my play, if I had a boyfriend. I was outraged, but almost pleased because I wanted to try out the fact that I didn't have to answer any of her questions. I truthfully said no. Then she asked me if there was a boy I liked. I did not want to answer. I did not want Kate, of all people, to know what boys I like. I naturally asked her why she was asking. She informed me that I was drawing hearts all over my paper. I was doodling on my paper, but there was absolutely no connection to any boys on it!

This may be a good point to add that there was only one other student in the class with me, and she was not there that day. When I didn't reply to Kate's question, she said that she wished she could find something in the room that could show me how crimson my face had turned.

There were more incidents, but I am going to spare you the details. The straw that broke the camel's back was when I was in the audience, about to see a play, and Kate came up to me before the play started and acted as if I was in a reserved area and pretended she was calling security on me, causing everyone in the audience to stare. I found out later that this was supposed to be a joke.

My parents talked to me and to each other and we decided I'd be better off out of Kate's class. I had always dreaded going to the class and being confronted by Kate and her questions. I also hated doing her homework, and she was asking me to stretch my play to the limits and rewrite it further, when I felt it didn't need any more work.

I am very outgoing, friendly, and dramatic, and in

Mona Weiner reading from her play at the awards ceremony.

Kate's class I acted extremely quiet and studious. It was as if the real me was being pushed far back by the invading Kate was doing. But in a way I also didn't want to quit, and I protested when my parents told me they wanted me to quit. I liked being shocking to Kate, and not being obedient and answering her questions. But my parents, my mother especially, didn't want me in the class.

In the end, I did not finish the class, but I did continue writing plays. I recently entered the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards contest with a poem, a short story, and my play. I found out that the play has won two awards – gold regional, and either gold or silver national. I don't know yet. Kate does not know I have won this contest. The draft I sent in was the one *I* liked.

In general, I think parents should by all means consider letting their child quit a class or activity, or at least take a break from it. Of course, if there's a situation where a child wants to take horseback riding just because it's popular, and then suddenly scuba diving is the craze and the child wants to quit horseback riding, that's an exception!

Mother Suggested He Stop; Switching Teachers

From Kai Crowe Getty (VA):

I have not quit an organized activity on my own, but I was in a writer's club from the time I was 7 to the time I was 8 1/2. It was really over my head, but I couldn't or wouldn't think about it. I dictated everything to my mom and I would read what I dictated to the writer's club group.

Since the group was over my head and almost everyone was older than me, my mom decided that it was too old for me and thought it would be a good idea to stop for a while, so I did.

We have just moved. I was taking piano lessons where we lived before, and when we moved I started again with another teacher. My previous teacher was, or became, a very, very good friend of mine. She was very helpful and always encouraging, kind, and wonderful. She is a homeschooling mother. It was hard for me to switch to

another teacher, but I have found another piano teacher who is just as nice and shares the same qualities. They have different methods of teaching but to me they are equally good.

My brother Brian and I took swimming lessons during the summer two years ago. The teacher was not encouraging about getting kids to go off the diving board. When I saw her push a little boy off the board into his sister's arms, I was a little apprehensive. My experience there was not the best, but I did learn to swim. I was one of only four kids who stuck it out for all the lessons. We stuck it out because we'd already paid for the lessons and we didn't want to stop in the middle. But we didn't go back the next summer.

I think that when a child asks to quit an organized activity, the parents should try to figure out why the child wants to quit and discuss it with him or her. Then they should discuss it with the teacher because the teacher may not be aware that the child is not having a very good experience. If they can, the parents and teacher should try to make it better. But it depends – sometimes the parents might say, "I understand why you want to quit," and tell the child that it's OK.

Stopping Model Train Hobby

From Nathan Post (VT):

When I was 7, I got my first model train set. Three years later I started a newsletter on model trains that I sold to my friends and relatives. I called it *My Model Railroad*. But the following year I decided that I had had enough of model trains, and I was tired of getting the newsletter out, so I stopped doing both of them.

Mom and Dad decided not to give me their opinions on whether they wanted me to stop, but they helped me decide for myself by helping me see the pros and cons of each side. Some reasons for continuing were: this was a hobby that I was interested in. Even though I knew I wanted to try other hobbies, I did not have a specific goal in mind. My biggest reason for not stopping was that I had already invested a lot of time and money into my trains. On the other hand, some reasons for stopping were: I wanted to try other hobbies, I wanted to be able to use the space where the train table was for other things, I was frustrated because I did not have the money and modeling skills it would take to make the type of set-up that I wanted. If I stopped, I knew I could still keep all of my train stuff, except for the layout table. So if I wanted to build a new layout some day I would still have a lot of my supplies. I felt that understanding the pros and cons really helped me because I wasn't being pushed to decide one way or the other. Mom and Dad accepted my decision.

Because I decided to stop trains, it made sense that I would also stop my newsletter. Mom had been helping me with the newsletter. Eventually we were both feeling tired of getting the newsletter out on time, and it was getting hard to find new subjects to write about. I had already cut down from monthly to bimonthly publication, but it was still stressful to get the newsletter out each time. Mom encouraged me to stop, but let me decide.

Now, a year later, I am starting another model train layout with my brother Brian. My desire of what I would like for a model railroad has changed and my modeling skills are better, so I feel that I can make the type of set-up that I would like to have. It was very helpful to take a break, but I want to go back to it now.

Another time I stopped an activity was last summer when I decided to stop swimming lessons. I had been taking swimming lessons for several years. The lesson content was now focusing on competitive swimming skills, like bounce dives off the board and flip and speed turns. I am a good swimmer, but I am not interested in swimming competitively. My stopping lessons was fine with Mom and Dad. I thought that this was the best way they could have reacted. I don't think I will continue lessons in the future.

Last September I started flute lessons with the local public school band. The teacher was not very good and was trying to teach about a dozen students on different instruments in less than one hour a week and was also trying to get us coordinated to perform at the winter school concert. I felt that I was not getting very much out of being in band and I wanted to stop. However, I really liked the flute and did not want to stop playing. So Mom and Dad found a teacher for me. I am taking private lessons once a week and I am enjoying playing flute. I think quitting the band was the right thing for me to do.

We all have to stop and change activities sometime. If we didn't, then we would never be able to try new things. As we get older we learn more and our interests change, and so we must change our activities to follow what we feel is right for us. Change often means stopping an activity, and it can be hard to stop. But when we need to stop an activity, then we should.

Trying School

In GWS #95 we published several interviews with long-time homeschoolers who had tried school and then decided to leave again. Now Zoë Blowen-Ledoux of Maine writes:

When I was 12, I went to school for the first time. I had been a lifelong homeschooler until then. I wanted to prove to myself that I could do traditional school work, and I also wanted to belong to a community of people my age who shared goals and experiences. We live in a town where there are not many others like ourselves. I dreamt of spending days in a row with friends, working on common projects and discussing meaningful ideas.

My parents recognized my need and we began the search for my school with the one that was free, nearby, and provided transportation: the public school. To me, the idea of school was special and exciting. When I visited the school for a week, I was amazed to find that the kids who were there didn't see it that way at all. In every class, the first and last ten minutes were wasted with fooling around. The teachers and students had little or no respect for each other. The teachers didn't seem intellectually active or excited about their subjects. I decided this school was not the place for me.

Our search continued. When I visited Hebron Academy, the middle school building conformed to my fantasies and preconceptions of what a school should be. The two young women teachers I met on the tour are probably what made me sure I wanted to go there. They had such energy and life, and I wanted to be like them. When I applied and received a full scholarship, it confirmed for me that I belonged there and they knew it.

As far as the academics went, I was very successful at Hebron, making all A's and B's. But as it turned out, I didn't like it or care. My parents, unlike all my classmates' parents, were philosophically at odds with the school's heavy academic approach. For me, the grades were meaningless and everyone's intensity and anxiety about them were exhausting.

It hadn't occurred to me to expect the cliquishness both in my seventh grade class and in the entire middle and upper schools. Once again, I was without my true community. It took me a while to understand this because I wanted so badly for it to match my fantasy. But I found I had little respect for or interest in my classmates and their concerns. Wearing the right clothes, putting others down, collecting boys and "friends" (allies in the social wars against each other) all took priority over individuals' sense of right and wrong. I was in constant conflict with myself over my sense of appropriate behavior as opposed to what I could clearly see was acceptable and expected. It didn't help that home didn't change – I seemed to live in two worlds and neither one understood that the other existed.

Something truly shocking to me was the teachers' consistent failure to intervene when a girl (whom I'll call Samantha) was regularly ostracized and cruelly teased. And it seems amusing to me now that all eleven other girls in the class would even pay attention to Katherine, who said, "Anyone who doesn't wear GAP jeans is stupid!" But it wasn't funny that I felt forced to be silent about how Samantha was treated. During the second semester, I took a stand against this abuse. I tried to talk the girls out of it, but they just ignored me. When I shared my concern with the middle school director, her response was, "I don't want to make it worse by drawing attention to her. I'm hoping it will go away by itself." So much for community! Needless to say, the problem didn't go away. All the students knew they had permission to go on harassing her.

Another source of stress for me was a teacher who, on more than one occasion, humiliated me for being a vegetarian. He saw *me* as being unreasonable and overly difficult. He sure didn't see my differentness as special.

Throughout the nine months of school, I gave up family life and many activities for homework. In the whole experience, what I feel most angry about is the lack of recognition on the part of the teachers and the school for the commitment and sacrifice I made. All the kids made that sacrifice – the hours of work, the long bus rides, the ten-hour days. At the year-end ceremony only the academic stars got awards. I cried on the way home in the car with my parents. One of my friends, who wasn't much of an academic star at all, rode with us. My father asked her what she would have given herself an award for. She said, "For bringing that D in Science up to a B. I worked really hard." I told her I would have given her an award for being generous. She always shared and she was the one girl who never played Katherine's nasty clique games or took part in the meanness to Samantha.

Going to school was a journey of self discovery for me. It was something I passionately wanted though I didn't even know what it was before I experienced it. Since leaving school, I have come to realize that I benefited from that experience. I know now that I can carry through on something I've committed to even though it's hard and I don't like it. I have more confidence about my ability to attempt something new or difficult.

This year, I began by reading Grace Llewellyn's books and learned that my real community is out there and I am not alone. I have found that internships are learning experiences that are much more satisfying than school, and that "intellectually active" and "academic" are not synonyms. I have found something that I'm both good at *and* that I like: theater. Right now I'm assistant stage manager for a production at the Public Theater. I am meeting New York actors and learning about the way a real show goes up. I am also reading a pile of books lent to me by a director at another theater where I was an assistant director for a children's play this winter. Tonight I will change sets and manage costumes and run the backstage during the show. I'm glad I lived out my school dream to make room for this more interesting life.

Alternatives to College

These stories and reflections are from grown-up homeschoolers who are moving out into the world and pursuing their interests in ways other than going to college.

Intern at a Living History Village

Kim Kopel homeschooled her entire life. When she was 17 she began thinking about what to do next, and she decided that she did not want to go to college but instead wanted to find some kind of work or internship. A few months before she turned 18, Kim began keeping a journal which chronicled the process of figuring out what to do and then recorded her first months away from home. Kim writes, "I wrote this journal because I was going through the period of transition between childhood and adulthood, trying to make sense of all the issues, dilemmas, and changes that I was suddenly facing for the first time. Writing was a way to sort it all out, deal with it all, and share with others my experience and perspective on growing up."

Here are excerpts from Kim's journal:

April 30, 1992

I find myself becoming more and more interested in the idea of working at a living history museum, possibly re-enacting early American life. This interest didn't just come out of the blue; I've been fascinated with history and the lives of everyday people throughout history, particularly American history, since I was very little. I was raised on books such as the *Little House on the Prairie* series, *Johnny Tremain*, *Lone Rider*, the *Anne of Green Gables* series. We were – still are – really into historical fiction, as a whole family. Back when my brother Burt and I were little, make-believe was our favorite game, and we were always pretending we were detectives (that was when I was reading the Nancy Drew series) or settlers coming to America and exploring the country. I remember after we read *Johnny Tremain* for the first time, we had our own make-believe Boston Tea Party, and we tape recorded it. We loved to tape record our games and figure out how to make the needed sound effects.

When I was about 12 our family took a vacation to Kentucky, and on one day we visited Fort Boonesboro, an historic fort Daniel Boone helped build. It was all very interesting, but what I remember most about it is watching a woman weaving on a huge loom in one of the fort buildings. I decided then and there that I was going to learn how to weave and that someday I would work in a living history museum. Back home in St. Louis, I began taking weaving lessons, which I loved, and eventually got my own loom.

And now I'm looking for a living history museum where I can work or volunteer. When I mentioned this interest of mine to my friend Susannah, she remembered that her friend Nancy had once told her of such a museum in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, called Strawbery Banke. So Susannah called up Strawbery Banke and asked them to send me some information on their volunteer program, which they did. I've read through it a dozen times, and each time I like the sound of it better; I think it's exactly the kind of place I'm looking for. There's free housing on the museum grounds for interns; if I could stay there, that would be great. I've written back to Ellen Vallone, the assistant to the director at Strawbery Banke, to let her know that I'm really interested in coming out there to volunteer at the museum for several months. Now I'm waiting impatiently for a reply!

Kim received an encouraging reply and at the end of June she went to visit Strawbery Banke. She told the people there that she had a spinning wheel and knew how to demonstrate spinning, and that appealed to them so much (because they didn't currently have someone to do that) that they invited her to come to Strawbery Banke as soon as intern housing could become available. Kim returned that August to stay for several months. Though the internship did not pay, Kim was able to work at various part-time jobs in Portsmouth. These excerpts are from her journal during her first weeks at SB.

August 5, 1992

I'm lying on my bed in Hough House, SB's intern housing. I think I'm really going to like it here! The house is pretty neat; it's old (one of the historic museum houses), two stories, big. It's so strange to look out my bedroom window on this historic neighborhood, complete with dirt streets. Feels like I'm in another time period.

After I arrived earlier today and had settled in, Ellen left me with Kathleen, who took me around the museum and introduced me to a few people. Then we went back to her office and talked a little about what I'd like to do at the museum. She said I can go on a guided tour tomorrow, think about exactly how and where I want to spend my time here, and then we'll work out a schedule for me. I want to demonstrate spinning, of course, but I don't want to do too much at first. Maybe a couple of hours every day, or every other day, or something like that, because I'd also like to spend time working with the horticulture department taking care of the museum's historic gardens, and maybe doing some interpreting. Guides at SB are called interpreters, as they're supposed to interpret the museum's history to visitors.

I met the four other interns living here. Both Anna and Shane offered to take me grocery shopping with them; I went with Anna because she'd asked me first. During the course of shopping we got to know each other a bit. She's a really neat person. We talked about college a little – she wanted to know if I was going. I explained to her that I don't want to go yet, that I want to work for a while first. She thought that was a good idea. A lot of people I talk to say that. It's kind of interesting.

I've talked to several people who wish they'd waited a couple of years before going to college.

I have a really good feeling about this place and the people here. If I'd gotten here and not felt so welcome and so enthusiastic about being here, I might be really homesick right now. As it is, I'm really looking forward to living and working here.

August 6, 1992

I met Kathleen in her office and she took me down to the visitor center so I could watch the brief orientation video and then take a short guided tour of the museum. Afterwards we went to the museum's Nutter House and Thomas Bailey Aldrich memorial; I'll be working in the latter as an interpreter from 1–3 every Tuesday and Thursday. Kathleen left me with the interpreter who was working there so that she could tell me about the items inside the small one-room memorial.

Kathleen and I made up a tentative schedule for me to follow until my spinning wheel gets here. Two days a week I'll be doing research for two projects of Kathleen's. The first one is to find out what kinds of spinning were done here at SB, what kinds of fibers were used (wool, flax, etc.), where they got them from (were there sheep here?), what kinds of materials were made from the yarn. She wants me to write a paper about what I find out, if I collect enough to write about.

The second project came up because Kathleen wanted me to help her plan this year's Fall and Halloween festivals. She asked me if I would do some research and find out what was going on at SB during the Salem witch trials, if there were any reports of witches or witchcraft here, and read up on witchcraft, superstitions, the origin of Halloween, and so on.

I'm also doing some reading on Thomas Bailey Aldrich so I'll know enough about him to answer questions visitors have when I interpret at the TBA memorial. TBA was an author, famous at the time he lived, I guess. Aldrich's book is sitting on my desk, along with a stack of about ten other books, all on spinning and weaving, which I plan to read.

August 12, 1992:

Interpreting at the TBA memorial was fairly painless, if somewhat tedious. Not too many people came through, and those who did mainly wanted to look around on their own and only asked a few questions. So it went well; it was easier than I thought it would be. I've never really had to speak to the public in that way before, but I didn't have any problem with it at all.

August 18, 1992:

Yesterday I met with Kathleen to figure out where I should demonstrate spinning. We decided on Sherburne House, because it's the oldest house in the museum and spinning and weaving would most likely have been done here in the late 1600s, early 1700s. I gave my first demonstration on Monday, just to try it out. Sherburne isn't a finished house; it just has displays about how the house was built, so I felt it'd be kind of rude to interrupt people as they read the displays. But most of them asked about what I was doing, so I think I'll just go ahead and tell them a little bit about it when they come in, and if they want to know more, they can ask.

August 27, 1992:

Yesterday when I was spinning a lot of visitors came through and most of them were really nice. I especially like the kids, because they're not afraid to ask questions as adults often are. In general, I've found that kids aren't as likely to be intimidated by things they don't know or understand, so they're free to be curious and ask questions. Most of the time their questions are very perceptive and thoughtful. The neat thing is that they're fascinated by spinning. I've lost track of how many times I've heard kids say, "That looks like fun! I want to try that." The other day a girl said, "That would be fun," and her mother replied, "Yeah, but it'd get boring after a while." I had to bite my lip to keep from saying, "And how would you know?"

Kim at Strawbery Banke

October 8, 1992:

Both yesterday and today I worked on my spinning and weaving paper, using Kathleen's computer. On Monday I'm meeting with her to talk about how to finish it up and to get any other ideas she has. I also want to ask her if I could spend some time each week working with her. I got to help her for a bit yesterday while I was in her office. I'm becoming interested in what she does – thinking up events, researching them to assure historical accuracy, planning them out (from the creative part of thinking of actual activities to the technical part of arranging to have people demonstrate crafts, for example, and then she also does the work of setting everything up on the day of the event). I hope Kathleen can use my help, because I think this is what I really want to do at Strawbery Banke.

Kim did end up spending most of her time at SB working on events with Kathleen. She stayed at SB through December of 1992, went home to St. Louis for a few months, returned to SB in April, stayed through December of 1993, and returned again to St. Louis to decide what to do next. While there, Kim wrote an essay reflecting on the process of leaving home.

People often wonder how homeschoolers will handle this transition, so we are excerpting part of her essay here:

As I prepared to leave home for the first time at 18, almost two years ago now, people began sharing with me their varying opinions about what it would be like. Most advised me that life out in the real world was tough, that being responsible for yourself took a lot of work. Most people seemed to assume that everyone gets pretty homesick, lonely, and depressed after leaving home for the first time.

While I was waiting at home for a room to open up for me in Strawbery Banke's intern housing, I spent some time thinking about what it would be like to live on my own. I looked forward to being able to go to SB and do work there that I was really interested in. I knew that I would miss my family and friends, but I also knew that it was time for me to go, and I wasn't worried or afraid. I looked at leaving home as an adventure, and although I didn't know exactly what it would be like or how it would turn out, I was confident that it would be a good experience. I didn't feel pressure to leave home for good. I knew I could try different things for months at a time and then come home when I was ready to figure out what to do next.

People talked about how difficult being responsible for yourself was. After 18 years as the oldest of six (now almost eight) kids, I found it liberating to be responsible only for myself. Being on my own gave me greater freedom than I'd ever imagined. Portsmouth is a small city, perfect for pedestrians, which was perfect for me because I had no car.

So there I was, having a great time, loving the work I was doing and having fun with the people I was meeting. And every once in a while, when I thought about how much I loved living there, I'd think about how it was supposed to be so hard to live on your own and how miserable I was supposed to be, and I'd laugh.

Of course I missed my family and friends at home. Making new friends didn't mean the ones I'd left behind were any less important to me and it didn't make me miss them any less. But I knew that I needed to be at SB, and I was happy there, so I was at peace with being away from home. I was just laughing with my boyfriend the other day about calling home. I said, "I called home whenever I finally remembered to!" Which isn't exactly true – I enjoyed talking to my family. But my point was that I didn't live for those phone calls. I didn't depend on my family to give me enough strength to make it through the day.

I learned so much from the time I spent on my own, it's hard to measure it or even put it into words. My dear friend and mentor, Fred, said it this way: "You're not worried about who or what you *aren't* anymore." I guess that's been the biggest change in me. I've stopped worrying about my shortcomings and faults and what I can't do and what, as a person, I'm not. I've learned not to be so hard on myself and to do my best and be happy with that. I've found that when I allow life to happen, do the things I'm interested in and keep my eyes open, opportunities just seem to present themselves.

I think this paragraph I wrote after I'd been on my own for a while sums it up:

"More than anything, this trip has given me the confidence that I can do whatever I've set my mind to. I don't worry about not knowing what's next anymore; being on my own has shown me that I can do it, that nothing horrible is going to happen if it takes a month or so to find out what I want to do next. In the course of living on my own, all my ideals and theories and principles have been put to the test, and I've seen that most of them serve me very well. The ones that don't, I changed, according to what I learned from my experience.

"One thing I've always believed, and that being on my own has reinforced, is that it's impossible for me to think in terms of forever. I have to look at what I want to do now, and find a way to do that; when I'm ready to move on, I'll know. Maybe I'll do something or stay somewhere for a couple of months, or ten years – who knows. That's not what really matters. What matters is whether I'm where I want to be, doing what I want to do right now."

Working as a Video Game Designer

Gwen Meehan (FL) writes:

Video games entered Patrick's life when he was 11. He was so captivated by them that he decided immediately that he wanted to be a game designer. He hasn't wavered in his focus, and now, almost seven years later, he is well on his way.

He began homeschooling when he was 13. He quickly produced a portfolio of his characters, backgrounds, and storylines, which he sent to various video game companies. He was not proficient enough at that point to use the computer for this. The work was done with pen, ink, paint, etc. He received a good response, considering this was his first effort and he was 13.

By the time he was 15, his portfolio was considerably better. He submitted it along with a cover letter (but no resume and nothing to indicate his age or education) to SEGA Technical Institute (STI). They are a research and development subsidiary of SEGA, the big video game company. His samples were favorably received and although the company declined to offer him a job at that time, they did say that they wanted to meet him and asked him to "drop in and see them next time" he was in California. The whole family was overjoyed at Pat's chance to have an interview, even though we knew that he was not being considered for a specific position. This goal had been on his mind for three years, and it was heavenly to see his pleasure.

Pat was sure that when they met him and heard his ideas, they would recognize his talent and hire him. We didn't discount that possibility, although it would have surprised us. We considered the trip most valuable because Pat would get a good glimpse of what his future could be and discover whether he was on the right track. We also knew that these people would be able to outline more realistically than we could exactly what and where he needed to study in order for them to employ him.

When Pat contacted STI to

arrange an interview, they were very cordial. He arranged to stay with his brother, who lives in California. Surely the people at STI must have been surprised to find a 15 year old on their doorstep. I must congratulate them, though; they were wonderful to him. He enjoyed a two-hour interview during which they treated him with the same respect they would have given to any adult job applicant. They showed him around and explained as nearly as they could what a game designer's job entails.

They told him that it did not matter that he was homeschooled. They felt that it would be good for him to have a GED although they didn't make that requirement loom large. They also said that a knowledge of math, through calculus, was imperative. They explained that he would need to be able to communicate with the programmers and that math was the most precise language for doing this. He asked whether they thought he should go to college and/or art school. They explained what we had already suspected: there is no school that teaches what is needed. Only on-the-job experience would impart what he had to learn.

Because Pat had been convinced that SEGA would hire him immediately, he was terribly dejected when he returned home. In fact, I cannot remember a worse period since we began homeschooling. But it was his problem and he had to solve it himself in his own way. All we could do was give him space and support. One of the hardest things I've had to learn as a parent of a homeschooler – to whom we have given the helm of his own life – is to stand back and lovingly allow him to make his own way. The most important part of his becoming is letting him get there by whatever means he chooses. After all, the entire process of "getting there" *is* his education.

Because the SEGA representatives had stressed math, that began to loom in Pat's mind as the only major obstacle to his becoming a game designer. He would not rest until I bought all of the Barron's textbooks, Algebra I through Calculus. Even though we were at the beach on vacation, he worked hard for six weeks. At the end of that time, he was more depressed than ever, convinced that he would not be able to teach himself, using this method or any other. At that point, he allowed me to find a tutor for him.

What a wonderful person we found: Penny Parrish. She had never worked with a homeschooler before, but by the time she and Pat were through, she had learned a lot about the value of homeschooling and Pat had learned what he needed as well. He went to her home for one hour, five times a week. He enthusiastically did 1–4 hours of homework each day. She was kind enough to give him a certificate showing that he had done the work. He was so proud of it that he decided to send it to SEGA to show them that he had taken their suggestions seriously. While he was at it, he asked them if he could come for the summer to be an intern. He suggested that there might be things he could do to help and at the same time he could learn whether he really wanted to continue trying to find a job as a game designer.

They asked him to send an up-to-date portfolio. He did so (and that one included a disk of computer graphics). They liked what they saw! Yes, he could come for the summer. They had never had an intern before, and we thought it was very generous of them to give Pat this chance. All of his persistence had paid off.

He went to California fully believing that he would find a group of talented, team-oriented people who appreciated video games, working together to produce the very best product. What he found was the real world: disparate folks with as many agendas as there were individuals. There were those who treated him like a peer and who were kind, tolerant, anxious to help him to fit in and to feel worthwhile. There were those who were jealous and mean. He felt that the secretary disliked him intensely. He was told that she thought that because he was so young, he should bow and scrape to her. He wasn't prepared for that kind of interaction, but in the future he will know how to handle it better.

One young man at SEGA was upset about Pat's homeschooling and asked Pat for details about it. No matter how hard Patrick tried to explain what he did and how he did it, this person said that he thought Patrick was a fraud and had, in fact, simply done what everyone else did, but did it at home with tutors. Pat didn't let this bother him too much – one can't expect universal acceptance.

Pat worked on SEGA's 1993 Christmas release game, Sonic Spinball. We are told that his name appears among the credits at the end. Naturally, he had hoped that SEGA would recognize his value and hire him permanently. There was a lot of talk in that direction. But apparently, from what Pat was able to piece together, the management simply could not bring themselves to hire someone his age (he was 17 by this time) even though they admitted to him that he was as good as or better than the others employed to do similar work. They said he had great potential, that he needed to "live," to "go out and make some silly teenage mistakes." They seemed to feel that if they hired him, they would somehow "take away his childhood" (their words). Good grief – he is thirsting for growth, not vegetation.

He came home with a lot of confusion and, once again, depression. But then another opportunity opened up. Before he had left for California, a friend had taken a copy of his portfolio and some computer disks with demonstrations of his graphic art and given them to a producer from a major TV network who was developing a children's program. Pat had been home only a few weeks when he was contacted by this producer, asked to submit some trial work, and then hired immediately. The program under research is to be an animated children's program. Pat hadn't wanted to do this kind of work because it would put greater emphasis on his art ability and sidetrack him from his goal of being a video game designer. But he saw that this job would provide him with some experience that he could use to get a job with a video company, and it would demonstrate the breadth of his

abilities. At no point was Pat's age or education status discussed. The only thing this producer was interested in was whether or not he had found someone who could do the job.

He began work with great anticipation and enthusiasm, but soon he became frustrated. He was working 70–80 hours a week and getting paid very little. He found that the producer was ambivalent about him because he had adult abilities but was only 17. The producer vacillated between adoration and contempt in his treatment of Pat. But in spite of all this, Pat did all the character development, background design, and animation for the program.

Because the producer was subjecting Pat to so much verbal abuse and criticism, I wondered if Pat was appearing too opinionated or arrogant or doing something else that would attract this kind of behavior. He has a tendency to believe strongly in himself. But without that confidence, there is no way he could have taken on such a job, let alone finished it. Of course such self-confidence is applauded in the adult world, but in a young person it may be labeled arrogant and cheeky. We talked about the possibility that Pat was somehow inviting the producer's behavior, and he said that he too had worried about that. In fact, he tried to stay away from making comments and suggestions so as not to appear too arrogant.

At one point, the producer apologized to Pat, explained that he had not realized just how talented Pat was when he hired him, and gave him a big pay raise. He also said that even if the TV program did not go into production, he wanted them to stay together and form their own company. But the respite lasted only a short time before the abuse resumed. After the final demo was completed, the producer's meanness surfaced again, and this time Pat could not tolerate it anymore. They parted company. We were sorry that Pat could not have held out longer and ended it to better advantage, but on the other hand we were amazed that he had lasted as long as he did.

We have found out from the New York executive in charge of the overall project that Pat's work was wonderful; the demo tested out beautifully and although there will be more months of testing, the prospects for the program are good.

Of course Pat is chagrined and disappointed that this job didn't work out better. He is planning at this point to try to get a job in another one of the large video game companies that has been advertising recently in the trade journals. Also, through a similar source he has discovered this week that a school for video game designers will open this fall in Vancouver. Pat has called already, indicated his interest, and told them up front that he is a homeschooler. This did not appear to faze them at all, and they were very interested in the fact that he has worked for SEGA and for a major TV network.

If neither of these possibilities materializes, in June he will begin taking a portfolio development class taught by an excellent, experienced artist and teacher here in Orlando. He now thinks that even if he gets into the video game school, he may want to go on to art school after that. Even though his computer graphics talent is very marketable, he realizes that it might be wise to broaden his base even further.

We support whichever direction Pat chooses, either the job or the schools. One of our older sons decided to go into the music industry following high school. It was a very good choice. He learned a great deal that he would have had to wait to learn if he had followed the crowd who were going immediately into higher education. We realize that although, traditionally, young people go directly from high school to college, that is not necessary for everyone. Pat has his whole life to custom design for himself.

Sometimes we wonder whether others might consider Pat's experiences too unusual. So much of life seems to hinge on being in the right place at the right time (the SEGA job) or by having a friend who has a friend (the TV job). On the other hand, this doesn't matter if you don't have the confidence to knock on the doors or the ability to follow through when friends knock for you.

Really I think that so much of what has materialized for Patrick is the direct result of his absolutely single-minded concentration and his conviction that he *is* a video game designer who knows how to design a successful game, and that he can convince employers of this. At no point has he thought of himself as *becoming* a game designer; he has always *been* one. And we have taken him seriously and been right behind him all the way. We never said to him, "You cannot do this at your age."

However, I must admit that at first we wobbled a bit as we became aware of the fears others had about the imagined dangers of video game playing. Pat calmly enumerated wonderful, positive reasons why he thought the concerns were overblown. He outlined for us the positive aspects he saw, and he wrote an article about this in GWS #76. We decided that we must consider what's right for us and not restrict our child from something that is so important to him because of imagined problems which other people have identified.

People say to me, "Well, Gwen, it has worked so well for Patrick because he is a genius and you are able to support him." And I reply, "No, Patrick is *not* a genius." His great strength has been his indefatigable confidence. He knew he wanted control over his education, and he fought until he got it. Then he used the opportunity to develop his strengths and bring his dreams into reality.

So don't believe the educators who tell you that only they know what your child needs. Free your child to discover who he or she is and then to embellish the discovery. Don't worry about the higher education stuff. It will take care of itself. The more of these young people who emerge from childhood unschooled but fully capable, the more they show the world that it is possible. Once people know it can be done, then others do it.

For a list of grown-up homeschoolers, in college and out, who are willing to answer others' questions, see GWS #97.

The Choice That Saved Her Life

Maggie Barker is a grown-up homeschooler who now, at 21, races sled dogs and runs dogsledding programs for young people. Recently she wrote:

Something happened to me at my last dogsled race that not only seemed to have a lot to do with my unschooled upbringing but may have saved my life. I had to make choices in that race that were in contrast to the linear, completion-means-success orientation that my friends tell me the school system has encouraged them to have.

I left the starting chute in Marquette, Michigan in the Upper Peninsula Sled Dog Championship amidst a crowd of 10,000 cheering people. It was exciting but also a little nerve-racking driving my team of ten dogs, used to forest, mountains, and silent expanses, through streets packed with people. After about eight miles we hit the forest trail and I felt more comfortable, though still a little jumpy from the excitement of our takeoff. This race was to cover 240 miles and my plan was to run the first 100 nighttime miles at a slower pace and then, after my mandatory rest at the halfway point, to put speed on for the trip up the Ford River and toward the finish of the race.

My team was the first one in at the halfway point and my father and brothers were there to wrap the dogs' legs, unharness them, and care for them while I took a little rest. During the next eight hours, while I was resting, a disastrous rise in temperatures caused the beginning of a thaw. I had noticed when I crossed the twenty miles of Lake Michigan's Little Bay de Noc that a little slush topped the trail. Now, eight hours later, the temperatures were in the upper 30's. Sled dogs do best in temperatures of subzero to 10 degrees. Still, things didn't look that bad as I took off at 4 PM from that layover checkpoint to cross more Bay ice and then turn north onto the Ford River.

I wasn't long up the Ford when it began to rain. We continued on through slush, my boots filling with it, my dogs trudging through it. The night came on and every time I had to cross under a bridge, the melting black ice made it look as though we were plunging into the river. I had to get off the sled runners, walk to the front of the team, and lead my leaders, Piper and Lark, across it. At one point the dogs got to the bank and I had to command them back to the river. I knew why they wanted off – they are nature-smart and they knew the river was not that safe. During this time two of my dogs went through the ice but managed to get back up on it. I decided that this race was not fun for me nor good for my dogs, and so when I finally saw two men standing on the bank of this forest-lined river, I asked them if they could help me get my team off the river. They had a hunt camp which they took me to and I immediately bedded down my dogs, taking Piper, who seemed very distressed, in by their wood stove.

I did not know at this point that while I was struggling on the slush of the Ford River, a Canadian musher had gone through the ice on the bay I had crossed earlier and had drowned along with seven of his dogs. I did not know that the race had been cut short forty miles from its original finish. I did not know that some other racers were deciding to stop and that some would continue to push through these undogsledding conditions. I had made a decision for me and my dogs based on what we were experiencing at the time.

Later that night I talked to my racing comrades. One, a musher of 40, said he'd have never put himself or his dogs through this race if he hadn't needed the prize money so badly. Another young driver of about my age, whom I've been friends with for several years, said he never considered stopping until someone in charge told him the race was halted. Another racer told me he hoped his dogs hadn't lost faith in him for making them go over that unsafe trail.

In my five seasons of racing I have never not completed a race before, but I felt good about my decision in this race. I knew I'd maintained my dogs' good faith in me (very important in the relationship between sled dog and musher) and I'd kept myself and my dogs safe. My brother Ben told me that if the wrong part of my team or sled had gone down in the river I'd have been swept away under the ice and not found until spring! I was especially pleased when Dr. Tim, my vet, told me he was extremely proud of me for putting my dogs ahead of the win or the race purse.

Maggie Barker after a race

I realize that if my whole life had been filled with the idea that I had to complete every book I started reading, or that I had to progress from grade 1 to 12 without stopping in order to succeed, or that everything a teacher told me was correct and to be obeyed, my choices would have been very different. In this case the teacher was the race director and I didn't feel I could rely on her to tell me whether the race should continue since it wasn't possible for her to be present on this isolated river. I had to make the judgment for myself, whereas I knew my friend would keep going until the race director (teacher) told him it was time to stop. I was pleased I hadn't lost the ability to think for myself and that money and winning had not taken priority over my good sense.

Maybe it's a generalization, but I can't help thinking that anyone raised outside the school system would have made the same decision I made that fateful night when Bill Orizetti lost his life.

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The Wrong Solution

April Johnson (CA) writes:

This past week, a good friend of mine decided that she could endure her high school schedule no longer. She pleaded with her mother not to subject her to that environment anymore. After the tears were shed and angrily swatted away in frustration, my friend was finally allowed to stay home from school for two days on the condition that she would meet with a psychiatrist.

She consented. She explained that she had absolutely no desire to go to high school and that even thinking about it turned her stomach. She said that she felt the whole high school scene was stupid and a waste of time. Instead of being able to take the classes that she wanted, she was put into the same classes as everyone else. Because she didn't want to be there, her grades began slipping, which caused stress at home. Her teachers soon grew irritated with her lack of enthusiasm and often ridiculed her during class time. She grew more and more depressed and edgy, which caused her to fight with and lose some of her friends.

At one point she told me that she honestly wasn't suicidal but that she didn't feel like she had that much to look forward to in life, and she didn't really care if she was run over by a truck tomorrow. I told her that I cared very much and she should too.

The psychiatrist diagnosed my friend with "moderate to severe depression" and put her on Prozac. She returned to school on Monday with directions to take a pill if she felt down. In short, in order to stand school, my friend has to be drugged. Does this sound crazy to anyone else? Why doesn't this girl homeschool herself? Because her parents are completely against the idea. We've talked about homeschooling before, and I lent my friend *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, which she read from cover to cover in about two days. Upon returning it to me, she said that her folks would never let her stay home, but she might be able to convince them to let her take a fashion design class or two at the local junior college. Finally her parents agreed to this and she enrolled in a Monday night class. She loved it and when the semester ended she said that she wanted to take psychology next. Her dad informed her that if she wanted to take another class, it would have to be in a practical field such as math or business. Needless to say, she hasn't attempted to take another class.

Meanwhile, younger children are also going to school drugged. I've known a couple of people who were on the drug Ritalin and I know that they had a terrible time sleeping at night. One would go on long bike rides at 2:00 in the morning because he couldn't fall asleep. Another was described by his teacher as acting like a zombie. But did the drug improve their concentration, as it was supposed to? When I asked, they could not remember any significant improvement in their concentration.

My whole life, I've been told by radio, television, my parents, and others, to say no to drugs. I've been taught that drugs are bad for my body and mind. What am I to think when teachers and doctors promote drug use? I think it's wrong, and anyone who has to take a pill each morning in order to get on the school bus is in the wrong place and something needs to change.

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since issue #98. Our complete 1994 Directory of Families was published in GWS #96. Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory (check here *and* in #96, #97, #98). We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

AL — Stuart & Penny POPWELL (Luke/81, Laura/83) 2249 Wire Rd, Auburn 36830

AZ — Gwynne OKOREN (Adrian/91) PO Box 453, Wenden 85357

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Gary & Melissa CLARK (Amy/85, Nicholas/88, Thomas/91) PO Box 1073, El Dorado 95623 (change) **(H)** ••• David & Patricia MUNRO (Miranda/84, Deborah/86) 957 Roxanne St, Livermore 94550 **(H)**

CA, South (zips to 94000) — Ann & Michael DeLOLLIS (Erik/88, Kathryn/91) 5330 E Madison, Fresno 93727 ••• Nancy FRIEDLAND & Alan MOSES (Marina/84, Ethan/87) 1521 Robbins St, Santa Barbara 93101 (change) ••• Steve & Darlene LESTER (Nathen/71, Ely/73, Damian/78, Gabe/80, Ben/86) PO Box 203, Joshua Tree 92252 ••• Luisa MUNOZ (Michael/76, Serena/78, Arlen/80) 619-491-5867 (San Diego) **(H)** ••• Bill & Sea PETERSON (Kellie/79, Colin/81) PO Box 5085, Avalon 90704 ••• Dean SHEARS & Barbara SAWZAK-SHEARS (Dean/86, Bethany/89) 1311 Henshaw Rd, Oceanside 92056

FL — Jim & Kerry McCALL (James/85, Amy & Matthew/87, June/92) Redlands Christian Home Educators, 9870 Martinique Dr, Cutler Ridge 33189

IL — Rick & Suzanne ACKERSON (Aaron/81, Samuel/92) 215 Washington St, Park Forest 60466 ••• Dean & Mary DiCARLO (Adam/82)18321 Riegel Rd, Homewood 60430 ••• Harvey & Ellie DUNHAM (Zach/83, Calvin/86, Hannah/88, Tessa/90) 409 Hill Av, Glen Ellyn 60137 **(H)**

IN — Suzanne CARTER & Paul BURKETT (Ian/71, Shaun/78, Patrick/86, Molly/88) 622 S 22 St, Terre Haute 47803 (change) ••• Donald & Carolyn DUGGAN (Erica/86, Boise/88, Seamus/92) 4111 Forest Green Dr, Newburgh 47630

IA — Terri BENSKY & Ernie FREDRICKSON (Caleb/89) Rt 2 Box 143, Afton 50830

KS — Susan & Don PEACH (Elliott & Clark/89) Rt 1 Box 28A, Rush Center 67575

KY — Chuck & Lydia WHITFORD (Ravi/83)1924 Wrocklage Av, Louisville 40205

MD — Al & Martine PALMITER (Dean/88, Olivia/91) 14220 Dennington Pl, Rockville 20853 ••• Sara SMITH (Briana/83) 5515 Yorkshire Dr, Camp Spgs 20748

MA — Dean & Anne CROMACK (Johanna/88, Abigail/91) 11 Phillips Dr, W Boylston 01583 ••• Cliff & Sue GAULIN (Cliffy/88, Jake/91) 304 N Sturbridge Rd, Charlton 01507 ••• Beatrice & Gus MADEIROS (Betty-Ann/79) Southeastern Mass. Homeschool Assoc, PO Box 4336, Fall River 02723-0403

MI — Sam & Irene ANDZELEWSKI (Simon/83, Alaina/88) 2948 Oakview Dr, Dryden 48428-9790 ••• Roger & Carla BLOOM (Geoffrey/88) 73 E 40th St, Fremont 49412 ••• Gail GRAVNSTRETER (Tara/81, Jonathan/82, Justin/87, Jordan/90) 8650 Knox, Clarkston 48348 ••• Vicki HALL (Joseph/79) 13549 U.S. 12, Union 49130 ••• Diana NEWMAN (Athena/88, Teddy/90, Harold/93) 1025 N Fletcher Rd, Chelsea 48118 ••• Ivar & Jennifer ROZENS (Ben/80) 33411 Jefferson Av, St Clair Shores 48082

MN — Ann & Bob GREGORY-BJORKLUND (Willie/86) 175 McCarrons St, Roseville 55113

MS — Laura ELKINS & John ROBBINS (Allbriton/84, Adele/88) 612 S 8th St, Oxford 38655

NJ — Pat DeLUCA (Christopher/86, Laura/91) 239 Walnut Av, Bogata 07603-1605 ••• Carolyn OGLESBY (Lauren/80, Doug/82, Robbie/87, Annie/88) 8 Parker Rd, Chester 07930

NY — JoAnne & Warren EDSALL (Marc/89) 1 Denwood Terr, Bath 14810 ••• Susan & Eugene GARDNER (Sarah/87, Emily/91) 37 Lamplighter Ln, Saratoga Spgs 12866 ••• Suzanne JUNG & John SEAVER (Jes/79) 5130 Rt 227, Burdett 14818 (change) ••• Mike MUNDY & Theresa LOCHNER (Molly/91, baby/94) 548 Beach 132nd St, Belle Harbor 11694 **(H)**

OH — Harrison & Suzanne BOLYARD (Aaron/83, Simon/85) 941 Orchard Dr, Rossford 43460

OK — Lynne KELLER & Stephen KENTON (Leah/82, Leslie/83, Lessa/86) Home Educators Resource Organization (HERO), 475 College, Norman 73069 **(H)**

OR — Beth & Steve ERFURTH (Kira/76, Shane/79, Charlotte & Emily/89) 1890 Tigertail Rd, Eugene 97405 **(H)** ••• Ann & Alan HUSTER (Angela/85, Abby/88, Monica/82) 1734 Gibson Way NW, Albany 97321 (change) **(H)**

PA — Ruth & James DUMAS (Rosalie/90) PO Box 3476, Gettysburg 17325-0476

TN — Bob & Trish ADKINSON (Elissa/88, Brennan/91) 6634 Lanier Rd, Maryville 37801 ••• Debbie & Mike NELSON (Kayleigh/88, Nicholas/90) 2665 Hickory Valley Rd, Maynardville 37807

UT — P. M. DENMAN & Darrel NASH (Bryan/77, Marie Elise/82) 1656 W Paiute Rd, St George 84770 (change) ••• Tricia & George SAGEN (Amberley/89, Alexis/91, George/93) 843 N Grove Dr, Pleasant Grove 84062 ••• Kelly & Barry KING (Elizabeth/88, Sarah/90, Benjamin/93) RR 3 Box 431, Jericho 05465 **(H)**

VA — Bob & Karen WARREN (Nathan/81, Katelyn/86, Emily/89) Rt 1 Box 1830, Reedville 22539

WA — Patti BLYSTONE (Seth/80, Sean/83, Dylan/87) PO Box 484, Ridgefield 98642 (change)

WV — Susan & Steve WILLIAMS (Matthew/79, Jonathan/82, Mark/85) 1702 Smith Rd, Charleston 25314

WI — Clark & Sarajane SNYDER (Elizabeth/83, Becky/85) 14711 Rangeline Rd, Nekoosa 54457 **(H)** ••• Phil & Janice ZINDEL (Sarah/87) 7591 Gilmore Lake Rd, Lake Tomahawk 54539 **(H)**

Canada:

BC — Sazjo STONE & John GILBERT (Saeward/81, Sascha/83, Oban/86, Thea/89) 159 Highwood Pl, Saltspring Island V8K 1R9 (change)

Other Locations — Elisabeth ATMER, Karlavagen 111, S-115 26 Stockholm, **Sweden** ••• Ann AUSPIN (Paul/80, David/81) 2 Bullam Av, Mitcham, Victoria, **Australia** 3132 **(H)**

Groups to add to the Directory of Organizations that was published in GWS #96:

CT — Unschoolers' Support, 22 Wildrose Av, Guilford 06437 203-458-7402

FL — Redlands Christian Home Educators, 9870 Martinique Dr, Cutler Ridge 33189 305-233-2021

LA — Wild Azalea Unschoolers, 6055 General Meyer Av, New Orleans 70131 504-392-5647

MA — Homeschooling Together (Arlington/Belmont area), Dawn Lease 617-646-6829, Ann Lerman 617-489-3275, Southeastern Mass. Homeschool Assoc, PO Box 4336, Fall River 02723-0403, 508-672-0248

SC — Carolina SuperSchoolers, 777 Hillview St, Spartanburg 29302 ••• South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools, PO Box 2104, Irmo 29063-2104 ••• South Carolina Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 612, Lexington 28071-0612l, 803-951-8960

Address Changes:

MA — Homeschoolers of Mass. Education Club (Boston area) contact: Sheila Leavitt, 617-969-1273

RI — Rhode Island Guild of Home Teachers (Home Spun News), Box 11, Hope RI 02831 (Inquiry Packet $1): 401-821-1546

VA — Lifespan Educational & Resource Network (LEARN), 2520 Rocky Branch Rd, Vienna 22181, 703-281-9049

Our complete lists of certified teachers, lawyers, professors, psychologists, school districts, resource people, and grown-up homeschoolers were published in GWS #97.

Certified Teachers: Michelle Bush, 818-951-7744 (in Calif.; new phone # only) Mary Coles, 9255 36th SW, Seattle WA 98126 (reading & study skills) ••• Elizabeth Lower, 4875 Potomac Dr, Fairfield OH 45014 (Montessori) ••• LouAnna Perkins, Rt 1 Box 22C, Penobscot ME 04476 (K-8)

Resource People: Pose M.R. Boggs, 6223 Geronimo Cir, Anchorage AK 99504 (learning disabilities)

Grown-Up Homeschoolers:

Gordon Hubbell, Blvd Tsar Boris III No. 94, Sofia, Bulgaria (factory work, LDS missionary)

Ely Lester, PO Box 203, Joshua Tree CA 92252 (Rowland Heights Animation School)

Nathen Lester, PO Box 203, Joshua Tree CA 92252 (Mt. Shasta College – a recording engineering school)

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. Celana MELLON (16) Star Rt 1 Box 20, Woodward PA 16882; art, literature, music ••• PHILOS-JENSEN, 353 Willow St, W Barnstable MA 02668: Danny (14) sports, animals, rock music; Matthew (8) Legos, soccer, Power Rangers ••• Brittany MILLER (13) 16916 73rd Pl W, Edmonds WA 98026: horses, reading, arts ••• Elizabeth DIXON (11) PO Box 1203, Buffalo NY 14215: horses, hiking, nature ••• Vanessa FILKINS (14) 5458 Oxbow Rd, Cazenovia NY 13035: reading, computers, outdoors ••• Hallie WEBER (14) 2108 24th Av S, Minneapolis MN 55406, gymnastics, reading, theater ••• Simha McCARTER-RIBAKOFF (5) 1432 Sebastian Way, Sacramento CA 95864; karate, computers, biking ••• Julie-Ann TRUDEL (11) RR 1 Box 209, Cabot VT 05647, music, Earth, crafts ••• LAUGHLIN, 423 Sudden Valley, Bellingham WA 98226: Booker (11) comics, Deep Space Nine, drawing; Brooks (9) comics, Nintendo, toys ••• ARD, 33 Thompson Dr, Clarksville AR 72830: Nike (7) Parables, FunRuns, Genealogy; Vince (5) verses, postcards, golf ••• Clancy THOST (6) 3866 Center Av, Santa Barbara CA 93110; airplanes, horses, insects;

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Tristan REAPER (8) 3866 Center Av. Santa Barbara CA 93110; stamps, Legos, nature ••• Cathy SPURGIN (12) PO Box 206, Tishomingo OK 73460; music, animals, computers ••• ANDERSON, 124 Great Bay Rd, Greenland NH 03840: Haley (14) saxophone, art; Taury (13) fish, drawing, skateboarding; Winter (10) skateboarding, reading, snowboarding ••• Kristin BRAYTON (12) 18450 Fox Dr, Banning CA 92220; reading, animals, singing ••• Tom MATHERLY (7) 24 Maple St, Millbury MA 01527; sports, puppies, trolls ••• SOUZA, 2923 Michael Dr, Newbury Park CA 91320: Jared (13) comics, film making, rock; Jasmin (12) New Age, history, herbs; Jillian (9) piano, animals, fantasy ••• PETERSON, PO Box 5085, Avalon CA 90704 Kellie (14) drawing, horses, dancing; Colin (12) planes, electronics, bicycling ••• ANDZELEWSKI, 2948 Oakview Dr, Dryden MI 48428: Simon (10) hockey, culinary arts, art; Alaina (6) skating, art; books ••• COLK, 8 Akounah Cres, Buddina, Qld, Australia 4575. Naomi (7) claywork, swimming, drawing; Roxanne (4) ballet, swimming, biking ••• Lauren MORGAN (13) 800 Sloan Rd, Mansfield LA 71052: letters, country music, 4-H ••• Marika CIFOR (7) 1147 Leavenworth, San Francisco CA 94109; Lego, dolls, skating ••• Maressa ALRICH (12) PO Box 869, Greenville CA 95947; horses, whales, drawing ••• STONE, 159 Highwood Pl, Saltspring Island, BC, Canada V8K 1R9. Saeward (13) instruments, music, bicycles; Sascha (10) guitar, outdoors, carving; Oban (8) bicycles, music, outdoors; Thea (5) writing, swimming, outdoors ••• Briana SMITH (11) 5515 Yorkshire Dr, Camp Springs MD 20748; soccer, acting, wildlife ••• Joel CONBOY (14) RR 2, Sharbot Lake, ON, Canada K0H 2P0; reading, sports, outdoors ••• Joey MAYFIELD (15) 13549 US 12, Union MI 49130; comics, science fiction, reading ••• Debby MESSICK (7) Rt 1 Box 273, Laurel DE 19956; sewing, reading, babies ••• Ryan YATES (12) 72 Wildfield Dr, Warwick RI 02886; hockey, biking, skateboarding ••• Harmony WADE-HAK (9) 2107 Deauville Rd, Richmond VA 23235; gymnastics, swimming, rollerblading ••• Briann SMITH (11) 5515 Yorkshire Dr, Camp Spgs MD 20748; soccer, baseball cards, roilerblading ••• Gretal SCHNITZER (8) 7661 King Memorial Dr, Mentor OH 44060; archaeology, reading, art history

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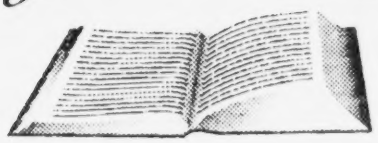
Book Reviews



Freedom's Children

by Ellen Levine #3124 $16.95 + s/h

When I first picked up this book, I thought it was going to be full of stories from children whose parents were active in the Civil Rights movement. I thought the narratives would be about what it was like to be a child growing up in the middle of all this activity. But black children and teenagers in the 1950s and '60s weren't just surrounded by activists; they *were* activists, often daring to do what no adult had dared to do before. The storytellers in this book vividly recall the bus boycotts, the sit-ins, the freedom rides, the desegregation of schools. Claudette Colvin was 15 when she refused to move to the back of the bus – and this was before Rosa Parks became famous for the same refusal. Barbara Howard was in eighth grade when she and other young people were the first to enter a movie theatre that had previously been for whites only. "I was so scared, I don't remember what the movie was," she recalls.

Oral history is such a vivid and moving way to learn about the texture and feeling of a particular time period. This could be a very good introduction to the Civil Rights movement for young people who haven't yet read much about it. It's also good for people who have only a general sense of what went on and want to know what regular, everyday people thought and felt and did. This is a book that will likely provoke many questions and discussions, perhaps all the more so because this is recent history and parents who read this book with their children will be able to share their own memories and perceptions. With its first-person accounts, its accessibility to a variety of ages, its demonstration of children's capabilities, this is the sort of book we love to make available.

— Susannah Sheffer

Black Foremothers

by Dorothy Sterling #3118 $11.95 + s/h

We are excited that this book is back in print. John Holt wrote when we first added it to our catalog:

This is an account of a too-little known part of our history: the lives of black women. The three courageous women depicted here were among the pioneers in the long, arduous, not-yet-ended struggle to free black people, first from slavery, then from legal and political discrimination. *Black Foremothers* is a useful supplement and corrective to the very incomplete American history that has always been taught in our schools, even the "best" schools, and it reminds us of the often discouraging work that must be done to do away with established customs and wrongs.

The most exciting of these stories is the life of Ellen Craft. Born in 1826, Ellen Craft was the only one of these three women to grow up a slave. When Ellen was 22, she and her new husband, William, afraid they might be separated from each other or from their children, if they should have any, decided to try to escape to the North and to freedom. Their plan was a daring one. Since Ellen was light-skinned, she planned to disguise herself as an invalid Southern gentleman and to disguise her husband as her servant.

... The other two women in this book did not face quite the same degree of danger as Ellen Craft, but they still had to overcome every kind of difficulty. ...

In today's troubled times, we all may gain much needed strength and courage from the stories of these brave women.

Wanted: Dead or Alive

by Ann McGovern #3166 $3.95 + s/h

This is one of those elusive finds – a book for young readers that neither romanticizes nor waters down the painful history of our country. When my son Jeremiah was 5 it qualified as his most favorite book in the world. He was so outraged by what he learned about slavery that he determined to spend his life speaking out against injustice of every kind. Although Jeremiah went on to read many more books about African-American history, this one remained a family favorite for a long time.

In very simple language, Ann McGovern tells the story of Harriet Tubman. Some of the book is told in Harriet's own words, taken from her autobiography. But the author has made this more than just a personal story of Harriet; you also get a good feel for pre-Civil War America. It's amazing how many historical events are packed into this one little book, especially since it is written at such an easy reading level. This was literally the first book Jeremiah ever read on his own.

Ann McGovern doesn't make value judgments as she writes, but merely relates the facts in a way that lets children feel their own personal rage at the inhumanity of slavery. This book can inspire a great love of history and a deep caring for social justice in the youngest of children.

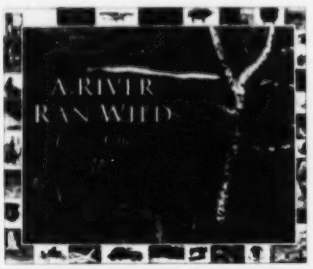
— Pam Gingold

Book Reviews

continued from p. 39

A River Ran Wild: An Environmental History

by Lynne Cherry #3148 $14.95 + s/h



Reading this book is like visiting an excellent, well-organized local museum that has a gift for working with families. The information is accessible, appropriate, and valuable for children while being artistically satisfying and intellectually inspiring for all ages.

This is the story of New England's Nashua River and how the people of a number of historical eras – Native American times, the Colonial period, the Industrial Revolution, and the twentieth century – have used, abused, and ultimately restored the river to ecological mobility. The book is a valuable children's history book in that it clearly shows the cause and effect relationship between the people's attitudes toward the river and the actions they then take, and then how these actions impact the condition of the river. The history is blended seamlessly with ecology, geography, and nature.

Each page of the text is accompanied by a beautiful, large illustration of the river during the particular time period. The borders of the pages contain meticulously drawn small illustrations of many artifacts from each era.

This is an excellent gift book because it can be appreciated on many levels, from toddlers up through older children. — Maureen Carey

Lincoln: A Photobiography

by Russell Freedman #3136 $7.95 + s/h

This Newbery Award winner is first and foremost a beautiful book. Its high-quality pages fairly glow with the attractively reproduced photographs, and the type is clear and easy to read.

The text is equally compelling. One can feel the research that went into this book in every line of the writing. Beginning with Lincoln's birth and childhood and continuing up to his assassination and funeral train, this book manages to cover an amazing amount in thirty pages. The writer gives us not only the facts of Lincoln's life but also a taste of the period in which he lived. Lincoln's journey from nearly neutral on the slavery question to the Emancipation Proclamation is well documented.

I was particularly struck by the passages that dealt with Lincoln's courtship of and marriage to Mary Ann Todd. She came alive for me far more than she had in previous books, and the descriptions of her grief and that of her husband at the deaths of two of their sons were moving.

I have read a lot about Lincoln and the Civil War period and yet I actually picked up new information on every page of this book. As the author says in the "Suggested Reading" appendix, so much has been written about Lincoln that it is mind-boggling even to think of it, let alone read it all. This book is one that should fit every reader's needs.

— Amanda Bergson-Shilcock

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GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

Issue 100

Focus on Creating Useful Schedules

Japanese School Refusers

Handling Anxiety

Challenging Tests

Celebrating 100 Issues

Theater Groups – See p. 6

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Contents

News & Reports p. 3-5

Changes to CO Law, Japanese School Refusers

Theater Groups p. 6-8

Resources & Recommendations p. 9

Challenges & Concerns p. 10-13

Handling Homeschooling Anxiety,
Children with Disabilities

Challenging Standardized Tests p. 14-15

Refusing to comply with the homeschooling law,
Encouraging teachers not to test

Making Decisions about College and Work p. 16-19

Watching Children Learn p. 20-23

Thoughts about Competition,
Volunteering at Radio Stations

FOCUS: Creating Useful Schedules p. 24-27

How Unschooling Led to *New Moon* magazine p. 28-29

Rethinking Childhood p. 30-31

Celebrating 100 Issues p. 32-36

Stories by Pat Farenga and Susannah Sheffer
about discovering John Holt's work

Book Reviews p. 39

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GWS

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By John Holt

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In this issue

Eleven-year-old Julie-Ann Trudel's mother writes up a lesson plan for her each week. Twelve-year-old Joanna Hoyt regularly spends a half an hour a day working on French and math. Fifteen-year-old Catherine Bercier follows a scheduled "To Do" list each day. Eleven-year-old Valerie Pickrell sits down at 9:00 each morning to work with her mother on academic subjects. Yet I think it's safe to say that all these kids consider themselves self-directed learners and susbcribe to the notion that homeschooling doesn't have to replicate school in the home. So what's going on? Are they contradicting themselves? Are they not as self-directed as they had thought?

No, on the contrary. They *are* self-directed, their homeschooling is not at all like school, and to me, understanding why this is so is crucial to understanding what self-directed learning, or unschooling, is all about.

Julie-Ann *asked* her mother to write up a list of suggested activities in each of the subject areas because she decided that she would like to learn "more formal stuff," and she figured out, for herself, that she would like help coming up with ways to begin and finding time for everything. Joanna experimented with many different types of schedules over the year before settling, this year, on one that includes regular time for French and math, because she had been frustrated with her progress in these areas and eager to carve out a specified time for working on them. Catherine herself writes up the "To Do" lists, and completes the tasks in consultation with her mother, because she has found that "having a schedule is actually very freeing" to her. And when Valerie sits down to work with her mother, they work "in unconventional ways" in subjects Valerie has decided to focus on.

Of course, this is not at all like what happens in most schools. In these homeschooling families, the schedules serve the students, helping them to make time for what they want to accomplish. In school, the students serve the schedule, without ever being asked what they want to accomplish or what kind of schedule would help. When we asked young GWS readers to write about schedules for this issue's Focus, we invited them to write about "what kind of schedule, if any, you *do* like to have. ... How much and what kind of scheduling do you find helpful in terms of your own needs and goals?" These are not questions we could have sensibly asked students in school, or at least not with respect to the academic subjects and the daytime hours.

Some homeschoolers write to us with a rather apologetic tone and say, "We're not totally unschoolers." Then they go on to describe how they follow some kind of schedule or make a point of covering some academic subjects regularly, as if these facts disqualify them from being true unschoolers. The point of unschooling, to me, is that the kids have a chance to figure out what they want to learn and what will help them learn it. Yes, they often do this in conjunction with their parents'; the parents' input is indeed important. But so is the kids', and that's what makes the situation so different from school. — Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

Changes to Colorado Law

Several Colorado readers sent us copies of the recent changes to the Colorado homeschool law. The law now allows for greater flexibility in the way homeschoolers submit their annual notification to the school district and in the way that homeschooled children are evaluated. The bill passed 33-2 in the Senate and 53-9 in the House, and was signed by the governor on April 14, according to the May 1994 issue of the Christian Home Educators of Colorado newsletter (1015 S Gaylord St #226, Denver CO 80209).

The law now allows homeschoolers to be evaluated by a "qualified person" outside the family, instead of by standardized tests, if the family so chooses. A "qualified person" is defined as "an individual who is selected by the parent of a child who is participating in a non-public home-based educational program to evaluate such child's progress and who is a teacher certified pursuant to article 60 of this title, a teacher who is employed by an independent parochial school, a licensed psychologist, or a person with a graduate degree in education."

This qualified person then signs a statement saying that the homeschooled child has "made sufficient progress according to the child's ability," and the family submits that report to the local school *or* to an independent or parochial school (in the latter case, the family submits the name of that school to the local public school district).

Other changes to the law make the evaluation procedures still more flexible for homeschoolers. The law had previously said that homeschoolers needed to be evaluated when they reached "the equivalent age for grades three, five, seven, nine, and eleven." Now the phrase "the equivalent age" is deleted, so that the family can determine when the child reaches each grade level.

For parents who do choose standardized testing, the law had previously specified that they had to use the achievement test "used by the local school district of residence to evaluate children in [the homeschooled child's] age group." Now the only requirement is that the family use "a nationally standardized achievement test," so they can choose which one to use and it need not be the one that the local school uses.

The law had also previously said that the purpose of the evaluation of a homeschooled child was "to evaluate the educational progress of each child, as compared to the child's age group in the public school system." Now the final clause is deleted, so that the sentence just reads, "to evaluate the educational progress of each child."

Finally, the law now allows families to choose the format in which they submit their annual written notification of intent to homeschool. Previously, the law had allowed school districts to require parents to use the district's forms, and the Christian Home Educators of Colorado newsletter says that these forms had sometimes contained requests for information not required by law.

Another bill, SB 72, has just been signed by Colorado's governor, and this one makes it easier for homeschoolers to participate in extracurricular activities in private schools that allow such participation, according to a memo from Concerned Parents of Colorado (PO Box 547, Florissant CO 80816). The Colorado High School Athletics Association can no longer prevent homeschoolers from participating.

Furthermore, another bill which deals with participation in school activities has gone to the governor's desk for his signature. Homeschoolers in Colorado had already been allowed to participate in *public* school extracurricular activities, but they were charged fees for this participation that were sometimes much higher than what public school students were charged. This bill originally restricted districts from charging homeschoolers more than public school students, but in the Senate this provision was changed, so that now the bill says districts may not charge homeschoolers more than 150% of the public school fees. Concerned Parents of Colorado writes that this is an increase for some districts but an improvement for others.

Japanese School Refusers

From Pat Montgomery, director of the Clonlara Home Based Education Program

When I visited Japan in 1984, my hosts pointed out a 10-storey hospital in Tokyo. They told me that every storey in the hospital was filled with school refusers. These are children from 3 or 4 years old to adolescents who have refused to attend school. In the hospital they were supposedly being rehabilitated for their phobia, so that they could return to school.

Since then I have learned that the number of school refusers in Japan is phenomenal. The pressure is so great in many of the schools that the children just cannot take it, and there is also a lot of bullying, which I see as a direct result of the pressure.

There is pressure to be admitted to some of the schools that are considered better than the regular schools. Then, once the children get to school, they are subject to a very rigid routine, and the pressure continues. They go to school for 280 days a year, 6 days a week. After-school "cram schools" become a part of their life early on. They're cramming for the exams that will determine which high school track they will go on – if they make the academic track, that's considered good because it will get them into the university.

The central administrative authority in Tokyo just turns its head about this problem of school refusers, because they don't know what to do. As I

understand it, many of these kids refuse so strongly that there's just no way to make them go. They become catatonic or throw violent tantrums. In the past, these kids either stayed home, not doing much of anything, or were hospitalized. Some were made to feel very ashamed for being school refusers. We had one Japanese child over here at Clonlara who was clearly a very depressed and troubled child. When her mother came over to the U.S., we learned that the girl had been a school refuser and her father had badgered her at every meal, telling her what a failure she was and what shame she was bringing on the family. Her mother had sent her to the U.S. in the hopes of having her escape this, but of course the girl still felt terrible about herself.

The exciting thing that has happened in recent years is that many free schools are being established specifically for school refusers. In the early 1980s books about Clonlara, and other alternatives, were published in Japan, and interest spread. The word got around that alternatives were possible. For years some Japanese families have sent their children to the Clonlara Campus School and to Summerhill in England. As word spread, Japanese people began to create their own free schools as well.

When I was in Japan in 1984 I met a woman named Keiko Otsuko, who was at that time teaching in public schools. She told me that the school refusers were breaking her heart, and she asked what I thought she should do. She asked if she should continue working in the public schools and try to make changes there, or should she pursue a vision of creating a place that would help to heal the school refusers. I don't even remember saying this, but she tells me now that I told her to follow her vision and see what she could accomplish. She opened a free school called Tokyo Shure, and it has been in operation for ten years. They have 130 students now, and they're about to open a second campus. They serve these students, who were formerly school refusers, in a very fluid way: they can come all day, or for part of the day; whatever they want. It's a marvelous set-up that deals with the needs of these students.

In Japan, people are not officially allowed to start schools unless they have 1000 students, but people are simply starting small schools anyway. Again, the central authority just turns its head. Many of these schools now belong to the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools that we have here in the U.S., and some come to our conferences and bring teachers, students, and parents.

It's interesting to observe the differences between the Japanese free schools and the ones in the U.S.. As a culture, we are very individually oriented in the U.S., whereas the Japanese have a group mentality. They have a saying, "The nail that sticks up will get hammered down." People just don't do things on their own. The woman who started Tokyo Shure would never have succeeded if she had tried to do it all by herself. She had to gather many like-minded people around her first.

What I've seen in the Japanese free schools I've visited is that the students operate very much as a group. They are doing things that are very different from what kids in other schools are doing, but they are doing them as a group. You don't see one child off in a corner doing one thing, and two other kids off somewhere else doing their thing, as you do in free schools here. I think this is wonderful, because it means that the Japanese have found a way to develop free schools that fit with their culture.

I often think both cultures would benefit if we learned a bit from one another. We could benefit from learning to be more generous, to think of the needs of the group, and I think some of the Japanese might welcome a greater freedom of individual expression, particularly in the creative arts.

This past spring, a group of students and teachers from Clonlara went to visit Tokyo Shure, and then a group of them came to visit the U.S.. In the fall, I will be going over there to help Tokyo Shure set up a home-based education program, much like we have at Clonlara. Just as we did years ago, they see a home-based education program as a way both of serving the needs of families who would like to teach their own kids and of bringing more money into the school. I believe there is already a lot of interest among the Japanese in home education. Our Clonlara program serves hundreds of Japanese families now. As far as I know, the Tokyo Shure program will be the first homeschool program for Japanese students that is based in Japan.

Office News

[SS:] We are sorry to say goodbye to Dawn Lease, who has been our capable order processor for the past two years. If you've called the office to place an order or ask questions, you've probably heard Dawn's cheerful voice. We'll miss her and her children Spencer and Eliza, but we wish them luck in their new home in Florida.

Milagros Chil will be taking on Dawn's job, after having worked at the Latino Health Institute in Boston for the past year and a half. She will be bringing 7 1/2-year-old Sharyl and 2-year-old Luisa with her to the office, and is looking forward to starting homeschooling with Sharyl this fall.

We are in the process of restructuring our John Holt's Book and Music Catalog to have fewer items and a greater focus on the ideas and approach that people associate with us. We will be adding some new items in the fall (as usual) and cutting *more* than usual, so now is a good time to purchase books that you've been meaning to get from us. We'll be enclosing lists of the cut books in with your orders, and you can also call and ask us for one of these lists or just call to inquire if a particular book is going to be cut from the catalog.

Having fewer items in our fall 1994 catalog will mean that the catalog itself can accommodate longer descriptions of the books we do carry. We will also be including questions and answers about homeschooling in this fall catalog, so that rather than having a full catalog and then a separate introductory catalog, as we now have, we'll have one catalog that lists all the books we carry *and* has questions and answers. We hope many of you will use this catalog to acquaint people with homeschooling, as several of our readers and customers have

already done.

As you may have seen in our spring-summer 1994 catalog, we are now selling a small booklet called John Holt's Reading List ($2 + s/h), which gives information about all the books we have sold at one time but no longer sell. Over the years we have had to cut books that have gone out of print, have not sold well, or that we have chosen to replace with new titles. Most of the time, we still love and enthusiastically recommend the books we have cut from the catalog, which is why we wanted to make this list of titles available. Now that we are cutting many more titles from the upcoming catalog, we are thinking of creating an Unschoolers' Resource Guide (that's a tentative title) that would describe all these wonderful books and materials that our review committee has taken the time to evaluate. So look for our new catalog in the fall and this resource guide sometime next spring.

GWS #102 will contain our complete Directory of families and organizations. Please take a moment now to check your listing as it appeared in GWS #96 or in any of the subsequent issues. If that listing is still correct, you don't need to do anything – it will automatically appear in GWS #102. If you need to change that listing, now is the time to do it. Please fill out the form at the back of this issue and send it in by **October 31, 1994**. If you are part of a homeschool group, check the list of organizations and make sure that the information is correct there as well (remember that we have included address changes in every subsequent issue, so the info might be incorrect in #96 but corrected in a later issue).

Calendar

Aug. 26-27, 1994: Minnesota Homeschoolers Alliance 3rd annual conference at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. For info: 612-491-2828.

Sept. 11 & 12: John Taylor Gatto lecture and workshop at Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, sponsored by Ashland Homeschoolers. For info: 503-482-6961.

Sept. 13-16: Oregon Homeschool Chautauqua, with Grace Llewellyn. For info: Kim Gordon, 6501 SW Macadam Av, Portland OR 97202.

Sept. 16-18: California Coalition of People for Alternative Learning Situations Southern California Regional Campout at Leo Carillo State Beach in Malibu. For info: 310-831-4150.

Sept. 28: Alternative Education Conference at Fitchburg (MA) State College, with Pat Farenga speaking. For info: 508-345-2151

Sept. 30-Oct. 2: National Homeschool Association annual conference at Camp Ernst, Kentucky. For info: NHA, PO Box 157290, Cincinnati OH 45215-7290; 513-772-9580.

Oct. 8: West Virginia Home Educators Assoc. annual conference in Clarksburg. Pat Farenga, featured speaker. For info: WVHEA, PO Box 3707, Charleston WV 25337-3707; 1-800-736-WVHE.

We are happy to print announcements about major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #101 (events in mid-October or later) is 9/10. Deadline for GWS #102 (events in mid-December or later) is 11/10.

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Theater Groups

Forming a Home-schoolers' Group

From Sheila Leavitt of Massachusetts:

Three years ago, when my son Eben was 7, he said he wanted to have a block party. We live in a densely populated suburban neighborhood, and Eben went around interviewing the neighbors, asking them what they thought would be the best type of block party. We ended up having a swing band and a potluck meal. Eben also wanted to put on a play, so a couple of months before the party, we began rehearsing with the kids on the block and some other friends of ours. We adapted the children's story *Too Much Noise* into a play that was about 25 minutes long. One older child narrated the action and the younger kids didn't have many lines to learn. I directed the play and helped the kids make sets.

Since then the homeschoolers around here have had various types of theater groups. Once we hired someone to do improvisation and acting exercises with the kids. But my kids, at least, weren't satisfied to have it just be process with no product. They wanted to put on a real show and have an audience. One day we were sitting around the table reading the book *Flat Stanley*, and Eben said, "This would be a good show." We thought about it and realized it could be adapted. That night I sat down and wrote the script and the songs. We had some music that Eben had composed, and we also used some music that he's playing for his various music lessons (he takes classical and jazz piano).

Then I began calling around to homeschoolers in the area. We got about a dozen kids who were interested at first. Then people began talking it up at our other events, and others became interested. We kept adding parts as new kids got involved. In the end 21 kids were in it, ranging in age from 3-12.

I hadn't done a lot with big groups of kids, although I did do some substitute teaching years ago (but I never liked it). But this was different, because I love theater, so although I was partly doing it for my kids, I was also doing it for myself, which made it really fun. Also, I think the kids who were in it really wanted to be in it. I don't think there was anybody who was just doing it because their parents thought it would be good for them.

At first I thought that finding rehearsal space would be a stumbling block, but I called the local library and they gave us free space. We met there once a week for about five months. Sometimes when the weather was nice we would rehearse outside, and sometimes the kids wanted to play instead of rehearse, but I thought that was good because it helped them to become a more tightly knit group.

Ariella Lichtman and Julianna Goldstone in *Flat Stanley*

At the first rehearsal, I read the kids the original book, and then I told them that I had adapted it into a play. I knew many of the kids so I had some idea of who might be good for each role, but we all discussed it because I didn't want them to feel that I had chosen their parts for them. At first two kids wanted the main role, so they were going to split it, but then one of them decided he didn't want to do it after all. As rehearsals got going another boy wanted a bigger part than he had had originally, so I expanded his role.

I had done a lot of theater in high school, and I was a theater major for a year in college. What I really love is set design, so I looked forward to designing and making the sets with the kids. The biggest thing I had to learn was how to work well with the group of kids. I read a bunch of books on improvisation with children, and on different theater games. I recommend *Impro* by Keith Johnstone, and *Theater Games for Rehearsal* by Viola Spolin. In the first rehearsals I just wanted to get the kids comfortable with loosening up. We did some games where they acted out different situations. Then I encouraged the kids to imagine their characters specifically – if they were playing a policeman, I encouraged them to imagine that specific policeman rather than a generic policeman. What was he like? How did he feel? Then we practiced the songs. Eben was the accompanist as well as acting one of the parts.

The one thing that I have always had a problem with in children's theater is that you often can't hear the kids. So from the first day we worked on being loud and slow and clear. It was wonderful to see that some of the children who had originally had trouble speaking clearly or saying certain sounds were magnificent during the show.

From the beginning I had picked out the space where we would peform: a theater where Eben had been doing dance performances. We just called up to reserve the space, and paid the fee. At first, I was willing to cover all the costs, because I didn't want people to feel that they had to pay in order for their kids to participate. But as the costs began to mount up, I became somewhat concerned, so I suggested that the kids sell ads for the program. That brought in some money. Then I happened to be talking to one of the moms about how much money we had spent so far, and she said she had had no idea it was that much. So she put the word out among the group and others did things like hold a raffle,

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which brought in a lot of money. We sold a lot of tickets and brought in more ads, and in the end we raised over $1100.

We gave two performances, and we had about 120 people in the audience at each one. We had advertised in local newspapers and put up flyers, so I would say about a third of the audience was people from the general public. That gave the kids the feeling that this was a real performance, not just something for people who knew them.

It was very nice to see how close the kids became throughout our work on the play, and how many of them grew in various ways. One girl had not been involved in many group activities and didn't know a lot of the kids. At the first rehearsal she told her mother she wanted to go home, but her mother encouraged her to stay and just listen. She ended up remaining involved, and she came through amazingly well during the performance. Another boy started out being very disruptive, and his mom told him he couldn't be in the play anymore. He stayed away for a while, but then we convinced him to come back and give it another try. In the end he developed his own unique part that was really just right for him.

Originally I had envisioned this group as the sort of group where the parents would just drop their kids off and go do something else during the rehearsal time. But as it turned out, the majority of the parents were around the majority of the time, either because their kids had asked them to stay at first, or because they wanted to talk to one another, or because they wanted to help out. Sometimes that was a problem because there were little siblings making noise, or the parents were talking too loudly to one another. But it was worth it because it made the whole experience feel like a wonderful group effort, with wonderful camaraderie. I felt as though I got to do exactly what I wanted to do – direct the play – and the other parents came through with the other tasks, like doing publicity.

My advice to other parents who want to put on a show is to get a piece of material that you really like a lot, and then adapt it. I think it's usually best if you work with a story, a script, rather than doing something that is totally improvised. While improvisation can be fun, it doesn't usually lead to a good show in the end unless you have some very strong actors. In working on the show, my advice is to take into account the strengths of the kids you've got, and then build on them. You don't have to stick too closely to the story. We had one girl who has done a lot of gymnastics, for example, so we wrote in a spot where she did a series of backflips. It gave her a chance to shine in her own particular way. That was what I kept trying to find out: what each child wanted to do and could do well. Then we would find a way to incorporate that into the show.

All-Age Community Theater

From Rachel Lloyd (OH):

My daughter had been in a children's theater group, but when she was about 13, the group moved, and it would have been much more difficult for us to be involved with it. At that time she happened also to be in a play at the University of Toledo. The production manager for that show told us that he planned to direct a children's theater group that spring. He was associated with an adult community theater group in the area, and now he wanted to get a children's group going. We said we were interested.

A couple of months later we got together with him and two other families. The director's daughter was homeschooling, as was our daughter. The other two families were not homeschoolers. We decided to do a play that spring, and have been going for two years now, doing three plays a year. We call ourselves the Young Players Workshop and Company. For our last play about 28 families were involved, with about six of them being homeschoolers. We keep attracting more and more homeschoolers. Some of the school kids have been in their school's productions, but they like theater so much that they want to do more than the school has available, so they enjoy community theater as well. An advantage of our group is that we're able to use every child in some way, unlike in school where people may be competing for parts and then not get to participate. Some kids in our group prefer to be behind the scenes, because they want to get experience with the technical aspects of theater.

We say that the actors range from age 6 to 60. We draw from several communities in the area. The parents of kids who are involved often help by making costumes or doing other tasks. My daughter Natalie, who is now 15, puts out the newsletter for the group. I've been running the box office and setting up a lobby display, and keeping a scrapbook of the group's activities.

One difficulty has been finding space to rehearse and perform. Some churches in the area have been very cooperative about letting us use their space, but it isn't always suitable for the plays we want to do. We're looking into buying a building in a nearby town to fix up into a theater, and we're looking at ways to raise money for that project.

My daughter has found a lot of friends through this group, both homeschoolers and school kids. One of the homeschoolers has invited several of the kids from the group to his house for a week to do a video workshop, run by his father. In general, the homeschool kids and the school kids get along well. Occasionally the school kids say that the homeschoolers are lucky.

In general, my philosophy is that if a child is interested in something, parents shouldn't sit around waiting for someone else to do something about it, or pay someone else. I have found that often we can find a way to set something up ourselves.

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Clown Troupe

From Randa Morris of Ohio:

I was involved in theater when I was younger, and I've always had an interest in it. I wanted my ch'ldren to be able to enjoy theater too, but there wasn't anything for them to participate in in our area, since they were very young (they're 5 and 7 now).

I talked to the pastor of our church and suggested the idea of doing a theater group with the kids in the church. The pastor was interested and asked me to write up a proposal, so I wrote a proposal that detailed what my ideas were for the group.

I started with just my two kids and one other. We passed the word around, and soon we had eight kids. Then we had a parade through the streets and we handed out flyers about the group, and some members invited their friends, too, so soon we had a lot more people. We didn't want to limit it to kids in the church; we wanted to open it up to anyone.

We started off as a basic theater group, and in the end we became a clown troupe too. The first play we performed was a halloween play that the group wrote together. We had a meeting where we brainstormed together to come up with a theme for the play. Everybody threw out ideas, and one girl was the recorder – she wrote down the ideas. When we began to get an idea for the play, the kids would act out various scenes, just improvising, and when a scene went the way they wanted it to, the recorder would write it down and that became the script.

One girl in the group was hearing impaired and her speech was difficult to understand. We created a starring role for her that only required her to speak one phrase. I didn't want her to be left out or to end up with non-speaking roles all the time, so I was happy that we came up with this idea. She did extremely well in the show.

We met once a week for two hours, for rehearsal. As it got closer to the show, we tried to squeeze in three or four rehearsals a week. We were free to use the space in the church to perform, which was a big help.

During this time, I was working on getting my sunday school certificate, and I learned about a book called *A Ministry in Clowning*. I ordered the book, and even though it wasn't what I thought it would be, by that time I'd already come up with several ideas of my own about how the kids could get involved in clowning. We wanted to have a carnival or circus theme at our vacation Bible school, so about eight months ahead of time we started working on it. Some of the kids learned pantomime, some learned juggling, some learned magic tricks, some learned to tie balloon animals, some learned tumbling. I hadn't known how to do most of these things before, but I learned a lot by going to the library. It *is* possible to learn to juggle from a book, although it takes a lot of practice. When the kids started out they were very funny, but the books helped by explaining the process of teaching yourself to juggle, and the kids did learn. I have never been worried about not knowing how to do something. The kids thought I was hilarious when I was trying to figure out how to do all these things. I found a company called the American Toy Company through which I could order things like wigs and fake noses at wholesale prices.

The clowns spent a lot of time developing a character to go with their clown costume. We had some really creative kids. We had about 35 kids by this time, so we would make our own parade, and it was a lot of fun. People would wave and honk their horns as we went by.

The age range in the group was very wide, from my kids who were about 3 and 5 to the oldest who was a senior in high school. After about two years, when we were up to 35 kids in the group, it became too difficult for me to run it without any other adult to help, and no one volunteered to help, so I had to call it quits. It was a great experience, though.

For more on homeschoolers and theater, see GWS #71, #73, #76, #77, #82, #84

Resources & Recommendations

State Homeschooling Guides

Many state homeschooling groups have handbooks or guides about homeschooling in that state. If your group is working on creating such a guide and you'd like to see how other states have done it, take a look at these two that have just come out:

Homeschooling in Oregon: the Handbook, by Ann Lahrson, is a 280-page book with information about the Oregon law and Oregon resources and a great deal of general homeschooling information as well. The "Finding Your Family's Homeschooling Style" chapter, for example, is useful for homeschoolers in any state. The book is available for $14.95 plus $2 postage from Out of the Box Publishing, PO Box 80214, Portland OR 97280.

The Connecticut Home Educators Association's Resource Guide, called *Home Education in the Nutmeg State*, is a 48-page booklet that is a good example of a guide of this size. $8 from CHEA, Box 250, Cobalt CT 06414.

Apprenticeship Resources

The National Society for Experiential Education has published *The National Directory of Internships*. The brochure says it's a 600-page volume with listings for opportunities in 85 different fields (some examples, to give you an idea of the range, are: anthropology, architecture, botany, broadcasting, carpentry, clinical psychology, environmental education, international relations, outdoor adventure, peace and conflict resolution scientific research, theater, and veterinary medicine.) The listings are indexed by field, location, and organization. Each entry provides information about who to contact, how to apply, responsibilities, qualifications, academic credit, and compensation. The Directory is available for $26.50 (postpaid) from NSEE, 3509 Haworth Dr, Suite 207, Raleigh NC 27609-7229.

Former homeschooler Heidi Priesnitz has started The Mentor Apprentice Exchange, which, she says, is designed to "help connect young deschooled people across North America with hands-on, real life apprenticeships opportunities in a whole range of fields. A mentor/apprentice set-up is an exchange of skills, information, and wisdom between two people of any age. A subscription includes both a directory that lists available mentors, and people who are seeking apprentice opportunities, as well as a quarterly newsletter that welcomes reader input through letters and submissions. Listings in the directory are free with a subscription. Subscriptions are $22 (if from the U.S., send in U.S. funds) from The Mentor Apprentice Exchange, Box 405, Canning, NS B0P 1H0, Canada. Make checks payable to The Boiling Kettle.

Software Discounts

Beatrice Medeiros (MA) writes:

Homeschoolers can get discounts on software from three companies that give student-teacher discounts. The only requirement is two ID proofs to show that you are a student or a teacher. This can be supplied by writing your order on homeschool letterhead, or photocopying a letter from your school district approving your home school, or something similar, and then including a photocopy of your driver's license.

A while back, I found these companies in the Computer Shopper, a large computer catalog sold in bookstores, computer stores, and some supermarkets. Their ads can usually be found in the Showcase section of the catalog.

This is the way I bought two typesetting programs (PageMaker and Ventura) at half price. Each company offers a free catalog or price sheet. If you do not find what you want in the catalog, you should call the company. Because they have over 25,000 titles, they cannot list them all, and they are always getting new titles.

The three addresses are: (1) The Software Source, Inc, 2517 Hwy 35, Bldg N, Suite 201, Manasquan NJ 08736; 800-2898-3275. (2) Software Plus, 440 West St, Fort Lee NJ 07024; 201-585-0662. (3) Peripherals Plus Inc, 5016 Hwy 9, Howell NJ 07731; 908-363-2424.

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Handling Homeschooling Anxiety

Laurie Huffman (CO) writes:

In response to Deborah Goldeen's "Handling Anxiety" in GWS #98: my first reading of this letter left me feeling anxious. Then I got depressed, then totally discouraged, then – I snapped out of it! It was like I had been pulled backward into a pit that I had, with great determination, climbed out of years ago. It isn't that I don't believe in this thing of homeschooling anxiety. I most certainly do, but I think we're approaching it from the wrong frame of reference.

John Holt said in *Freedom and Beyond*, in the chapter, "Some Tensions of Freedom":

"Our language and habits of thought make it hard to deal with this idea of tensions. When we think of conflict, it is always between opposites, usually one Good and the other Bad ... Also, we like to get things settled. It irritates us when a difficulty keeps coming up again and again. We think, Why do we have to go through this, we've been through it before? If we could just find the right balance, the point of equilibrium, between those two conflicting forces and demands, they would cancel out and leave us alone. But in a tension, this never happens, can't happen. The conflicting pulls are both legitimate, they keep on pulling, and so the tension is permanent. ... When we attempt to put more freedom, autonomy, and choice into children's lives and learning ... these tensions appear."

When I first read this statement, after four or five years of unresolved anxiety, it dawned on me that I was fighting proverbial windmills. I was never, in my lifetime, going to defeat homeschooling anxiety, but I could accept it as a norm, and get on with my life. As Viktor Fankl so wisely pointed out, human beings have the ability to choose their attitudes in a given set of circumstances. No one can deny us that option.

So, I started thinking in new ways. That has made all the difference in the world. So what if I feel anxiety creeping up on me? Aha! There it is again – I recognize that feeling! But I don't have to give it the right-of-way anymore.

At about the same time that I made this wonderful discovery, I made another. I realized that part of my anxiety and frustration had more to do with my environment than with my homeschooling. My house was literally bulging with the so-called necessary educational paraphernalia. I started realizing that little of it was ever being used. So I put into action another powerful concept: simplification. I had four garage sales in two months and got over $400 out of them. I quite literally emptied half my house, and had a ball doing it. My kids got involved too, and to this day, almost ten years later, they are still avid "de-junkers" and live simplified lives in their own homes.

These days, when I start feeling the pinch of homeschooling anxiety, I go into my well-established self-defense pattern. First and most important, I refuse to give way to the emotion itself. I think of it as an oversensitive alarm system, a smoke detector that screeches when a match is lit. I consciously decide whether or not the alarm is legitimate, rather than expending energy on every little noise it makes. Second, to vent my feelings and get the adrenaline moving more effectively, I attack my environment with a vengeance. After an hour or so of de-junking in a part of the house that's been irritating me, I feel great. No more anxiety – no more junk.

I have seen far too many good homeschooling families buckle under the anxiety factor, feeling somehow that it was a sign of weakness. Some have thought it meant they had failed as homeschoolers entirely. They weren't capable (who is?) of maintaining constant fun for their kids without some occasional depression. All of this is such nonsense. Now, I realize that my personal system for deflecting anxiety seems simplistic, but that is precisely why I like it – it *is* simple. And instead of worrying about how to solve the anxiety, I am on my way to a really enjoyable day. Anxiety is a part of homeschooling, inseparable from the decision itself. We just aren't accustomed to willfully injecting high levels of anxiety and frustration into our lives. It feels counterproductive. But John was right, again – if we can once and for all accept the fact that tensions (or anxieties) in homeschooling aren't a matter of Good vs. Bad, but are a legitimate part of our decision, we would probably be unstoppable at best, and more cheerful at the very least.

From Cherylee Duncan (MO):

I have an 11 and 8 year old. This year was our first year of homeschooling. It was an anxious time for me, but it was also a very growing and learning time for us all.

When I first started homeschooling and wrote for help just like Deborah did, I got so many encouraging, helpful letters. In fact, two of the people who wrote to me asked me to write back, and now I have two homeschool pen-pals. I didn't write to ask specifically about anxiety, but I was asking that indirectly because I was asking, "How do I know how to unschool? How will I know if I'm doing it right? How will I know if my kids are going to get enough of everything they need?" All those questions boiled down to anxiety. It's funny – in all the letters I received, there was much encouragement and helpful advice, but, of course, nobody was really able to answer all my questions and alleviate my anxieties. Nobody could give me the concrete answers I was looking for. It wasn't until I jumped right in and started homeschooling that I realized our whole family would have to learn as we went.

And that's exactly how it worked. When we would try something, if it worked, we kept it up. If it didn't work,

we'd talk about how to change it. If it was so-so, we'd figure out how to make it work more to our liking. All of this didn't make the anxiety go away, but it certainly toned it down.

I think another thing that has helped is that I began to immerse us in homeschooling-related things. I joined a homeschooling support group, started going to homeschool Skate Day once a month, invited another homeschooling family to learn to draw with me and my kids once a week. One of the support group moms started a homeschool day once a week at the local Boys and Girls Club. We also joined a mostly homeschoolers 4-H Club. We went once a week to another art class taught by a homeschool mom. In other words, we surrounded ourselves with support and opportunity to share with others who have the same doubts. Also, I checked out tons of books from the library about homeschooling.

We sort of do a combination of textbooks and unschooling, leaning more towards interest-based learning. This year we did very little math from textbooks because the kids were convinced that they hated math, so we mostly concentrated on getting down the basics, working on multiplication tables. Most any other math we did was related to everyday experiences such as cooking, measuring, weighing, price comparing at the grocery store, counting change. We also played a lot of games like Monopoly and such. I checked out books at the library that involved math but were fun, and I let the kids choose what they wanted to do out of them.

What does this have to do with anxiety? Well, every so often I'd have severe doubts about what I was "doing to" my kids. I'd go on a tense rampage, get out their textbooks, declare that we were going to do some math, at least a little, every day. Then we'd start doing it, I'd hate it, they'd hate it, I'd get frustrated and feel all those feelings I'd had way back when, and then I'd throw my hands up and we'd forget about it until my next guilt-ridden rampage. So, after talking to lots of people and sending off to lots of companies for sample brochures, we've decided to go with Saxon Math for next year. I explained the concept to my kids and my daughter said that she was glad we were going to use it. I think they're relieved that I *might* be less inclined to rampage next year! After being away from a textbook and being subject to my anxieties, they're looking forward to a book.

I didn't have good experiences in school. I hated it and got bad grades from fifth grade on. That gave me much anxiety about whether I could homeschool or not. Now, after our first year of homeschooling, I don't feel that way because I'm learning right along with my kids, and I'm enjoying it and am more excited about learning than I've ever been in my life. I think that's one thing that has really helped me *and* the kids – I don't think of myself so much as their teacher, but as someone to help guide them and learn along with them. There are things I think I want to change for next year, but I feel fairly relaxed about it because I've begun to believe in us and what we're capable of. My believing wholeheartedly in homeschooling has made a big difference for us. You have to learn from experience and from mistakes as you go along. Once I trusted that I *would* learn to adjust as we went along, I was able to relax more.

My husband and I have seen great leaps in our children's self-confidence, emotional stability, respect for themselves and each other, and especially the sincere friendship and caring that have developed between them. We've seen them become very self-motivated, which is the opposite of how they were when attending school. Personally, I learned that I am capable of learning and that I *enjoy* learning, particularly about history, which I hated as much as math before. My husband and I have learned that the more we take control of our own lives, as with homeschooling, the more we feel we *can* do. This may not sound that impressive, but if only you had known us in our more passive days!

From Jeanne Ferrari-Amas (HI):

Homeschooling involves tradeoffs like other decisions in our lives. While it is true that homeschooling seems to put the responsibility for the child's education on the parents, having children in school is not without anxieties either. I have my anxious periods, but it's usually because I'm comparing our home school to what I imagine children are doing and learning in school. This usually happens when I read our small community paper and read about various projects and activities that school children are doing. It always sounds like so much, but so much of what is written is for show.

My children enrolled in a very structured keyboard class with ten children this year. I go with them and it's made me realize how little attention children have in group situations, how little learning really goes on in class, and how repetitious and slow it has to be to accommodate everyone. I think we give too much credit to what children learn in schools. The music teacher is amazed at how my children are able to teach themselves new songs, whereas the other children have a "teach me" attitude. Having my children in this class has helped me relieve some of my anxiety about their learning.

A friend of mine has children the same ages as mine and she is full of anxieties about their schooling. Hearing her talk, I always feel that we have much more quality to our days, more control of our time and of what we learn. She is always anxious that her children will be behind in math and reading. She's constantly having to nag them about book reports. When her family goes on vacation during school time, the school gives her work for them to do which seems like such busywork to me. We recently took a two-week vacation and the children learned so much just being in a different place, doing different things. I couldn't imagine giving them schoolwork – it would have interfered. And who's to really know what they learned during this time?

I point all this out to my friend and she agrees, but she says, "I couldn't be with my children all day." That's when I tell her it's about tradeoffs.

I also believe that whether our kids are in school or homeschooling, we will continue to be anxious at times, because caring and anxiety go with being parents. The world does

seem to be full of increasing anxieties and fears. I believe, though, that our minds create the realities. My family's resolution this spring/Easter is to put our fears behind us and to refuse to be overpowered by the insecurities of the world. Instead of comparing our homeschooling to failing institutions or even trying to be like them, we're spreading the word about how wonderful homeschooling is, how it is a unique and exciting way to live and learn. And you know what? Our enthusiasm is wearing off on others!

Children With Disabilities

From Theodora Sobin of New Mexico:

I have been homeschooling my 7-year-old son, Nicholas, who was born with a heart defect and has mild cerebral palsy. I am experiencing quite a lot of subtle pressure to send him to school, both from the school officials and from the disability support groups we're associated with. The former claim that parents can't teach their own children (and what about social skills), and the later claim that it's politically improper to avoid the social activism involved in the fight for total inclusion of children with disabilities. I feel that I have to consider the needs of Nicholas. He doesn't care about social skills, as he is by nature a loner, and he hated his kindergarten experience. When we revised his IEP (Individualized Education Plan), I had him sign it because homeschooling was his choice. If there are parents out there with similar concerns I would like to hear from them.

[SS:] We referred Theodora to our list of resource people (last published in GWS #97) and to the National Challenged Homeschoolers Association (on our Resource List). We also asked her to tell us more about Nicholas's signing his own IEP. She replied:

In addition to having a heart defect, Nicholas has been diagnosed with mild cerebral palsy and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. I am skeptical about these diagnoses. If he has CP, it's so mild that all anyone could say is that he's a clumsy kid. His only obvious difference is that he's got a fairly major delay in speech. The ADHD diagnosis resulted from an unhappy testing experience – he wouldn't cooperate with the neuropsychologist. I think the diagnosis is a judgment on his personality and preferences. I agree that he is, as the teachers are fond of saying, noncompliant in the classroom, but what I see is that Nick is an extremely independent child with his own agenda. A classroom agenda rarely coincides with his. He wants to build houses, play computer, and write his own books.

When he was 4 we lived near Seattle and he went to a Special Ed. preschool run by the public schools. He would not move or speak voluntarily for them, for reasons he could not verbalize, so the following year I homeschooled him and went into the school for therapies. When we moved to Santa Fe, we put him in an inclusive preschool, just for the purposes of socialization. He had improved as far as compliance went, but he still would not talk to anyone. In the fall of 1993 we put him in what was termed an inclusive kindergarten, but it was really just a "side-by-side" special ed. class. The special ed. kids would meet in a room, and join the "regular" kindergarten kids for some of their classroom activities. We did this, again, to help him improve his communication and socialization skills, even though academically he should have been a first grader. He improved even further, but he still did not talk to others much. And in spite of his improvement, he hated school. He wasn't allowed to build houses, make his own books, or play on the computer there. He was actually doing first grade-level reading and mathematics at home. Since he wouldn't cooperate with the teachers in class or during testing, they had no idea what his capabilities were. I was dissatisfied with the situation but kept putting off any change until I was forced, by his health, to make changes. We thought he would have to undergo another heart surgery so we pulled him out of school so he could avoid the flu bugs. (As it turned out, he didn't need the surgery.) I had to renegotiate another IEP. This is the one I had him sign.

The notion to have him sign that document wasn't original with me. It was suggested to me by a man I met at a Partners in Policy-Making training in which I'm involved. Partners is a leadership training program for people with disabilities and for parents of children with disabilities. Its purpose is to empower us to be advocates for our children and to influence disability policy. A major issue in disability rights is the right to an education in the same classrooms as other children. While I believe wholeheartedly in educational choice for children with disabilities, I came to believe that what the system has to offer is not appropriate for my son. And the clincher was that he did not want to go to school.

Anyway, the gentleman I referred to told me about the struggle he had to get his daughter, who has CP, into an inclusive classroom. He included his daughter in the process, so she could help determine what kinds of supports she would need in the classroom. The logical result of this process was that she should sign the IEP. I was very impressed by this idea. I saw it was important to allow children to make decisions about their own lives, as far as they are able, so they can become competent in the decision-making process. But when they are young, and particularly if they are disabled, we adults tend to do too much decision-making for them. I felt that letting Nick sign the IEP was an opportunity I should not pass up. So when it came time for me to sign his IEP, which stipulated homeschooling and private occupational and physical therapy paid for by the school district, I demurred and brought the papers home. I discussed the options with Nick. He wanted to homeschool, so he signed the paper.

Kathy Boles (Australia) writes:

Our 8-year-old son Steven is very developmentally delayed, so he goes to a special school, which is the best option for everyone. Our daughter Jessica is nearly 6 and our other son, David, is 18 months. Ours is an unusual case as Steve is so developmentally delayed that he is a big drain on our physical and emotional resources. For this reason we depend on a variety of community agencies that I would

never otherwise enlist; these include school, in-home and center-based respite care, and government assistance in other ways.

Although Steve is average size for an 8 year old, he cannot walk independently, is not fully toilet-trained, has no speech, and gets into a lot of mischief appropriate to a child of around one year. Because he is so much bigger than an average toddler, child-proofing must be much more extensive, and he is a hefty size to move from one place to another. He cannot dress himself and needs to be supervised very carefully during mealtimes. He is able to feed himself to some extent and is making slow progress. Steven has a lovely personality, but he has the curiosity of a toddler and no inhibitions. Just as a toddler needs to be watched carefully lest his curiosity cause him to hurt himself or to break something, so must Steve be watched. There are few places we can take him and relax.

I have found that most people cannot imagine the impact of such a child on a family until they have spent some time in his company. They downplay the effect on our lives, however I might describe his behavior. The only time we can have a life that most families regard as normal is when someone else is looking after him.

I have found the various educational agencies invaluable for the respite they have given us over the years as well as the efforts they have made to teach Steven basic skills. It requires an immense amount of repetition and patience to help Steven acquire skills that come naturally to other children. He has been in a special education developmental unit, a special school, and is now in a special unit attached to a primary school. Many of the usual limitations of schools are absent. There are good student-teacher ratios, the programs are of necessity individualized, and the atmosphere is much more like that of the home. I have found the vast majority of people I have met in all agencies to be supportive, positive, and caring. I feel we are working as a team.

I am sure our home education would benefit immensely if we were not bound to the timetable of Steve's school, but this is only part of the tremendous difference having a child like Steve has made in our lives. Lost has been the spontaneity that enables normal families, particularly home educators, to make the most of life. We have to arrange for Steven to be looked after or to take him along, which makes the exercise much more difficult. To be able to go away anywhere I have to arrange for center-based care, which makes changes of plans difficult. We are very grateful for the agencies that make looking after Steven easier and allow us to lead a more normal life. I hope that the combined efforts of everyone, and Steve's own development, will make reliance on these agencies less imperative as time goes on.

This is a rather depressing account, but realistic, I believe. I must restate that Steve does have a lovely personality and we get a lot of enjoyment from our children.

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Challenging Standardized Tests

A Homeschooler Decides Not to Comply

From Ann Lahrson (OR):

I had been a schoolteacher before I began homeschooling. In school, I and other teachers knew that there were kids who could do the work but couldn't perform well on the test, and kids who got a high score on the test but didn't remember any of the material afterwards. I had been one of those kids myself, and I think doing well on tests gave me a false sense of self-worth, because although I did well on tests, I didn't magically have an understanding of what I could do or wanted to do, and when I graduated I remember feeling like a phony. Also, when I was a student, I remember that there were some kids in the class who clearly had a real grasp of the material, they really connected with it, but they didn't do as well on the tests. So what kind of message was that giving me? In some way, I learned that truly understanding the material *wasn't* necessarily the best thing.

When I worked part time as a teacher's assistant, I worked with the low reading group, and so much of what I was doing was just channeling the kids through the material to help them pass the test. We spent a lot of time doing practice tests. I saw how demoralized kids got by the tests, but coaching them was the only way I could think to get them through, in that environment.

When I began homeschooling and watching my children grow, I found that I couldn't imagine suggesting to them that the items on a standardized test were the only important items, the only things worth knowing. I didn't like the idea of them judging themselves, or limiting themselves, according to what the test said. Up until 1985 there was no homeschooling law in this state. When the law passed in 1985, annual testing was required. This is not a bad law for many people; I know that many people find it very easy to have their children take an annual test. But I was opposed to the testing, and my oldest child turned 7 just at the time that the law was passed, so she would have had to take the test that year. I decided that we would not have her take the test, which would put us out of compliance with the law. I decided that I would go the low-key route and keep a fairly low profile about being out of compliance.

I felt forced to go underground, but I did consider: what would I do if people came knocking at my door? I learned that the worst thing that could happen would be that I'd have to pay a fine of $100 or spend 30 days in jail. I decided that it wasn't worth going to jail and being away from my children, so I said to myself that if it ever got to that point, I *would* comply with the law.

In fact, my daughter was reading at an early age and would probably have been able to handle the test. But even so, had she not done well, I was concerned about the potential loss of self-esteem. And I didn't want her to learn the notion that there are only certain questions that are important and that at a certain age you must reach a certain spot. Again, it wasn't that I worried about how she would actually do on the test, but I worried about the overall effect of the test, and the prospect of the test, on our lives. If we had known we were going to face a standardized test at the end of each year, I might have had to become like a schoolteacher and coach her for the test, maybe teaching her things before she was ready. It would have affected how we homeschooled throughout the year.

I did have some concerns about what my children would learn from the fact that I had decided not to comply with the law. In general, I wanted them to learn to follow the rules of society, so I didn't know what kind of message they would be getting from me. I think ultimately what they learned, and what we've talked about, is that you have to choose carefully which rules you don't want to follow, which ones it's worth it to you to rebel against.

When my youngest daughter was 11 or so, she said that she wanted to try taking the test. She wanted to see if she could do it. I had no objection to that, because my original objection was to her being *required* to take the test before she was ready. In general, I want her to make decisions about her own education. So we arranged for a friend to administer the test, but because this friend wasn't an official tester according to the state's rules, we actually weren't in compliance with the law. When my daughter decided to take the test, she said it was just for her own information. In the end, all she was interested in was that she'd done fine. She didn't seem interested in the details of what she had gotten right and what she had gotten wrong. For her, I think, the test was a test of whether she could take such a test, follow such an agenda, and she saw that she could.

The following year, she chose not to take the test. She has decided that she won't take it because it is a "stupid" test. When I asked her what she meant by that, she said, "It doesn't tell you anything useful. If it was a test about butterflies, I could study about butterflies and then find out how much I remembered. But that test isn't *about* anything."

My older daughter went to school from sixth through tenth grades, and she's just come out again. In school she took tests, of course, and she did fine and felt very little anxiety about them, so I was glad I had held back when she was younger. This way, she was able to take them when she felt ready to. Now that she is homeschooling again, at 16, she decided to take the test that homeschoolers take because if you are in compliance with the homeschooling law, it opens various doors for you at her age. For example, she can get permission from her superintendent to take the GED before age 18. So at this point, it seemed worthwhile for her to take it.

In 1991 there was an attempt to

change the homeschooling law here, to require even more testing. There was a hearing, and I decided after some thought to speak out against the proposed change and to admit that I was out of compliance with the law because of the testing requirement. I was nervous about it, but for me it was one of those moments in life when you realize you have to take your own stand. Even though some other homeschoolers were in favor of the proposed law that required more testing, I just felt that I needed to say what I had to say. I said that I had never thought we shouldn't have testing for homeschoolers who want testing, but I did think there should be alternatives as there are in other states. I told them that I didn't think that good people doing good things for their children should be made to feel like criminals because of their educational philosophy.

I had never before publicly let anyone know that I was noncompliant, so I was nervous about it, but the chairperson of the education committee reassured me that they were glad to hear from me and I shouldn't worry about it. I think they wanted to hear from a broad base of people.

We are not by any means the only noncompliant homeschoolers in the state. We know several other families who do not test, I think for reasons similar to ours. The reasons I hear people giving lately are somewhat different from what they were years ago, though. Years ago I heard more about the message that tests would give kids about knowledge and learning. Now, in addition to that, I hear more about tests as invasions of privacy. I think as we parents begin to think less and less according to the way school does things, the nature of our objections to tests deepens, too.

Encouraging Teachers to Question Testing

Carol Sperry is a former teacher who has been a colleague of Seymour Papert, author of Mindstorms. *She is now a student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. We asked her to tell us about the workshops she has led that encourage teachers to challenge standardized tests:*

I was a teacher in the New York City public schools for 22 years, and of course I had to give a lot of standardized tests. I always resented the time it took and the emotional stress it placed on the children and, in another way, on the teachers. No matter how sure of themselves, how creative, how successful the teachers were, we were in some way judged by how good the children's tests scores were.

I was amazed at how many teachers were against standardized tests. As we sat around the teacher's lounge during testing time, we would talk about the tests and it was clear that the teachers didn't like having to give them and having to spend so much time preparing the kids for them.

A few years ago I was involved with a project funded by IBM for the San José Unified School District. The project involved working with the computer language, Logo, and I was interested in using the philosophy underlying Logo to shake the teachers out of their traditional mindset. One day during this project, one of the teachers came up to me and said, "If I'm depressed for the next two weeks, there's a reason." I asked why, and she said, "I have to test the kindergarten children." They had just instituted testing for the kindergarteners. I said to her, "Why are you going to do it?" "Because I have to," she said. "Well, why do you have to?" I asked. "What do you mean? They're making me." "Who?" "The principal."

At that point, I found myself thinking that there was a way this teacher could have gone to the principal and said, "I'm opposed to this testing, and I don't want to give it." Or, if she felt that that would put her in danger of losing her teaching position, maybe she could say, "I'll give this test, but under protest." I'm sure that some teachers *would* find their jobs in jeopardy if they refused to give a test. But I began to think, suppose this teacher found allies among the teachers in her school? Suppose many of them were against giving this test, too (or other tests)? What if they wrote a letter to the local newspaper and made a statement about it?

At around that time, there was to be a technology conference in Los Angeles. Because I was thinking about these issues of teachers and testing, I sent in an abstract called "The Teacher as Activist," and I ended up leading a session on that topic. I used as my opening statement that I personally don't know a single teacher who is in favor of standardized testing, so why is there testing in schools? Where is the power base, who is making the decisions? This brought a flood of reaction and response. Teachers said they were against testing but they felt powerless to do anything about it. Some of them had not fully thought through or articulated their position about it.

I've since done the same seminar in several places, and I always get the same response. I know that as a teacher, it had become clear to me that my own notions of how teaching and learning should take place, my intuitions, my sense of what was good for children, were constantly rubbing up against a system that had different ideas. I think many teachers feel the same way, but they feel powerless to do anything about it. Most teachers are afraid, and on some level they have reason to be afraid. But I also think that teachers don't stand up and argue when they could. I think if those teachers in San José had written a letter to the newspaper, it might have started something.

It's very difficult for teachers to get together within their own school, however. Teachers are kept separate, in their own classrooms, and there's no real time during the day for meetings and discussion. It's also very hard to have the energy to teach and to be an activist at the same time.

It does seem to me that there are things teachers can do when they object to something, however. It always bothers me that teachers' unions don't take up the issue of testing, for example. If so many teachers are against testing, why isn't there a platform about that at conferences of the AFT or the NEA?

Teachers have asked me to come back and do seminars with them that raise these issues, and I've said, "Better yet, why don't you organize these kinds of discussions yourselves?" It would be interesting to see what would happen then.

Making Decisions about College and Work

Pursuing Music, Animation, Sewing

Darlene Lester (CA) writes:

Since we've given our five kids the choice of going to school or not, there's been much entering and leaving public school over the years. Our first son, Nathen, was not really homeschooled. He attended many schools over a thirteen year period: a free school, a Montessori school, an expensive private school, and several public schools. He was only homeschooled for one year when he was 9. That was only because he was curious about what I was doing with his younger brothers. He was eager to go back to school the next year. He was the kind of child who liked to be told what to do. He very much preferred the regimentation of school. He liked being busy every minute. He liked competing. He liked getting A's and found it easy to do so. He enjoyed the crowding of kids together. He was game for almost any activity presented at school. In short, he seemed to thrive in that atmosphere, and year after year he chose to be there. When he was a senior in high school, he won several scholarships to college, but not nearly enough to go to a university or even a state college. When we checked it out, he saw that, because we couldn't afford to make up the difference, he would have to take out a loan. He began to realize that after all those years in school he had become a skilled student but hadn't the foggiest notion of what he wanted to "be" when he grew up. It didn't make sense to him to take out a loan for college when he didn't know what he would use college for. This was a sobering realization for him. He decided not to take out a loan. He went to our local community college for a couple of years and eventually got his AA (at very little expense) but with still no clue as to what to do with it. During his dabbling in college he did discover something he loves to do, though: write and record music. He does it every spare minute he has. Next fall he will enter a recording school in San Francisco.

Our son Ely, on the other hand, has had intense interests ever since he was little. He went to a Montessori preschool for one year and decided that school was not for him. He proceeded to homeschool until his sophomore year in high school. During his years at home he discovered and developed his talent for drawing. He took art lessons, drew every day, and delighted us with his increasing skill. He had a great love for Disney-style art and spent a lot of time drawing Disney characters. He got astoundingly good. At 12 he was earning money doing "quick sketch" portraits at parties. He learned how to do this from a retired artist who had worked at Disneyland. He sold several of his oil paintings in a local art gallery when he was 14. When he entered high school at age 15, his art teacher told me that she would keep Ely busy but that she couldn't teach him anything. Not surprisingly, Ely lost interest in art that year. It didn't take him long, though, to discover the superior band program at school, headed by a dynamic teacher who loved his work. Ely was utterly inspired by him. He took up saxophone that year and with no prior experience quickly rose to the top of the band. Art was forgotten for three years while Ely fell in love with and sought mastery in music.

Nathen and Ely were given the same hard line in high school, "If you don't go to college, you'll be working in fast food restaurants for the rest of your life." At home we tried to counteract that belief, but they both became influenced by it. Ely won a scholarship to a college with an excellent music department and went there for one semester. When he came home for Christmas he was very thoughtful. He confided in us that he had thought that music school was exactly what he wanted, but now he felt it wasn't. He realized that he loved music as an art, but he didn't think he wanted to do the things it took to work at it professionally or that he would even like the music business. He said that his high school experience had been very gratifying in an ego way, but he realized that his true gift was in art and that he missed it.

So he shifted gears and started researching art schools. He found out that they were all horrendously expensive. Finally he discovered a life drawing class in L.A. that was taught by a retired Disney animator. He signed up and made the two-and-a-half hour trip once a week. He met some people in the class who told him about an ROP animation class held at a high school in the area. He signed up for that, too, and said he felt like he was in the right place. I believe it, because his teacher indicated that Ely is "Disney material."

This ROP program funnels talented people into the animation industry by creating internships with the various animation studios. Ely just recently interviewed to become an intern at Film Roman, an animation company in L.A., and he got the internship. He will train there for

Damian Lester sewing custom-designed jeans

about a month, and if they like him, he'll be put on the payroll. We're all so pleased with this new development, and though it means he'll move away from home (we'll miss him terribly), he is moving toward his heart's desire, which all of us are behind one hundred percent!

The beauty of all this is that while Ely's artistic peers are grinding away in universities or expensive art schools, with no guarantee of work in that field, Ely will be busy training in the nitty-gritty work of his chosen career.

Steve and I have always told the boys that we've both had a wonderful life, each of us doing what we love to do (and getting paid for it), without having attended college. Instead, we move directly toward our goals with as few middlemen as possible. It was definitely a quicker and more enjoyable way to go, and it always seemed much cheaper. We are clear now that many kinds of work can be entered directly through some kind of apprenticeship arrangement, or through a trade school, or by simply working on your own, getting tips from mentors or books when you get stuck. We are more sure than ever that college is not for everyone, that for many kinds of work it is not the best route, that it is shamefully overpriced for what you get, that it doesn't guarantee you a good-paying job (or any job, for that matter), and that its hard sell given routinely in high school is not deserved.

Our third son, Damian, (now 16) read *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, at the beginning of this school year and it really helped set a positive tone for the year. One of his great loves is traveling, so he planned a traveling adventure that lasted seven weeks. He took a train to visit friends and relatives up and down the Pacific coast. When he returned, he surprised us with a new interest he'd discovered in his free time up north. He liked to sew. He had borrowed a friend's sewing machine, had analyzed his favorite pair of pants, and had made some custom jeans. His motivation for this had been that he couldn't find a pair of pants he liked in any store. We were so impressed with his work that we bought him a sewing machine for Christmas, and he's been sewing ever since. He's made jeans, shorts, and T-shirts, all without patterns. His workmanship and attention to detail is excellent. How did he learn this? I don't know. He had no teacher or training. He did study the sewing machine manual and he looked carefully at his pants to see how they were put together. But beyond that, I believe it is a gift he has, a kind of sixth sense. I think that gifts are like that. They bring with them a kind of ease and pleasure that makes developing them especially satisfying. When Damian sews, he works intently, only coming up for air (and food) once or twice during the day, and he often works late into the night. He continually works to improve his designs and is quite proud of the fruits of his labors.

Our boys are all learning that it is desirable and important to do what you love and that pursuing their interests in a direct manner is something we will heartily support. We hold each of them in the highest regard as unique individuals, and we are looking forward to seeing what they will do with their lives.

Choosing Williams College

Christian Murphy (PA) writes:

I always have a difficult time making decisions, so I figured that making such a monumental decision as which college to go to would be a long, drawn out, agonizing experience. It was long and drawn out, but not as agonizing as I expected.

My dream as a younger person was to go to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, because it is one of the best science schools on the east coast. As the decision time came closer, I began to think about what going to MIT would entail. I would probably be able to keep up in terms of scholastic excellence, but to do so I would probably have to concentrate in one specific area, and I was not sure what area I would want to concentrate in. MIT's promotional material was very impressive, but I didn't want to limit myself too soon.

I thought about Carnegie Mellon University as a place where I might find more breadth than at MIT. I visited Carnegie Mellon and talked to a professor or two. When I took a tour, the group was so large that I wouldn't have been able to hear the leader if I was at the back of the crowd. But I was able to hear about the class size of 200+ where a student only gets interaction with a graduate assistant. Admittedly, some of the graduate students at good schools are probably more knowledgeable than many teachers at other schools, but I decided that a big university was too big for me. It would be too easy to be lost in the shuffle as an undergraduate.

So I thought about places like Marlboro, which has 275 students, and Hampshire, which has 2000. Both are located in small towns, which I had by that time decided I preferred. It wasn't really the size that I was looking for, though. It was the learning style.

Marlboro has regular classes but also one-on-one tutorials that are often initiated by a student in a subject of his or her interest. I thought that this would be great. When we went for a visit, we learned that in the two areas I was interested in, math and physics, the departments had only one faculty member. Well, that would be OK if I liked that professor and he or she stayed there for the entire four years. But even then, I would only be getting one point of view on issues that have many sides. Maybe the students could fill in the other points of view, I thought. I stayed overnight in one of the dorms, so I got to talk to some of the students. I was unimpressed. They didn't talk about anything much of interest. I was disappointed and decided not to experience college there. I just wanted to go home at that point, but my parents thought it would be a good idea to swing by Hampshire and at least take a tour.

Hampshire's program is slightly different from the norm. There are some regular classes to begin with, but you end up doing some kind of independent work. I thought this would be a good way to get some research experience that I wouldn't have gotten at MIT as an undergraduate. The tour was very impressive, and I went away thinking that I might like to spend four years there. But then I thought about the fact that there were still only a few faculty members in each depart-

ment in the sciences, and I talked to some people who said that it takes many students there a couple of years to really start studying.

So I began again with small liberal arts colleges of a more normal bent. I looked over some material from Middlebury College and decided it would be worth a visit. Meanwhile, we had been lent a copy of the *U.S. News and World Report*'s survey of colleges. I didn't look at it much because I thought that those sorts of surveys couldn't tell you that much. My parents took it more seriously than I did, but not as seriously as *U.S. News* would have liked. However, I was able to give my parents a hard time about believing this compilation of "facts."

At the top of the list of small liberal arts colleges was Williams, in Massachusetts. My parents thought it would be interesting to visit there, just to see what the top of the list was like. So we went to Middlebury, where I was impressed, and then to Williams, where I was *very* impressed.

After taking the tour of Williams, my parents and I popped into the science building and were looking around. A man came over and asked us if he could provide us with any information. It turned out he was a faculty member in the computer science department, and we spent a good long time talking to him. Then we visited the math department and talked with a mathematician. There are about 2000 students at Williams and approximately 16 faculty members in the math department. This was astounding to me. And there seemed to be both quality and quantity here. The faculty members in the sciences do original research, and since there are no graduate students, undergraduates get to help out. It is possible for selected students to stay there during the summer and get paid either to do research of their own or to help a faculty member.

When I said that deciding which college to go to was easy, I meant easy for me. There were still a lot of long conversations with my parents. Once I returned home, I started sifting through all the information I had gathered. To apply to Williams I would have to take three achievement tests, which I wasn't thrilled about. But when I looked at the number of courses Williams offered, and their descriptions, I found so many that were interesting that I decided that tests were a minor hurdle.

None of the colleges that I was interested in had any difficulty with my homeschooling background and none required me to have a high school diploma or take the GED. They just wanted us to supply lots of material. Williams was the only college that still interested me, so I applied there. I went for early decision which, if I was accepted, would lock me in and I would not be able to apply anyplace else. But I would get to know one way or the other much sooner, and if I didn't get in then I could apply again under regular admissions or apply elsewhere. I had my heart set on Williams, so even if I was not accepted this year I was going to try again next year and keep beating at the door until they let me in.

The application process took a lot of work. My parents wrote a letter indicating how my schooling had been accomplished. I wrote an essay on an assigned topic, and I got several letters of recommendation from people I had worked with and college professors that I had taken courses from. Williams also requested an essay from one of my peers telling about me (this is part of their regular admission process). I had my sister do it since I have spent so much time with her. And of course, we filled out all the forms. After that it was a matter of waiting until the appointed day. On December 15 I received my acceptance letter. I will be attending there this fall. Now the hard part begins.

Choosing St. John's College

Dawn Shuman (PA) writes:

Deciding that I wanted to go to college was not an easy process. When I was 15, I began having serious discussions with each of my parents (they are separated, and I live with my mother) about whether I wanted to go to college or do something else. On Christmas Eve that year, my grandmother and father and other relatives talked to me about how important it was for me to go to the best college I could find so that I would fully use my intellectual potential, have a degree, and become part of the "wonderful experience" which they seem to think is essential to becoming a functioning member of middle-class America.

People in all parts of my life apparently thought the same things. I was, and still am, skeptical about all of these reasons for going to college. I know that I am capable of thinking and learning both in school and on my own. Also, I know that it is quite possible to do a lot of things without a college degree, and that you can always get one later if you really end up wanting or needing one. More important, nobody ever *asked* me if I wanted the trappings of middle-class American life. Quite often, homeschoolers are criticized for not preparing their children for the real world, and I know that my father and his family worried about me and my brothers in that regard. What I don't think they realize is that the sort of "real world" they wish we were prepared for doesn't exist for us. We have our own internal landscapes which include non-school ways of interacting with people, solving problems, self-discipline, learning, and understanding differences. We are different and we are always going to be, but understanding that we are different and that this doesn't make us bad people can make dealing with our extremely diverse society easier, more familiar. What I value is different from what many of my family members and acquaintances think I must, so if I ever have a "good" job and a house in a "safe" neighborhood, they are likely to be peripheral to my goals rather than *being* the goals.

However, I did think that college might very well *be* a valuable experience and that having been part of a college community, and having a degree, could one day be very useful to me. I started doing what I would have to do if I were going to college: taking the PSATs in October of my junior year. I am good at taking tests, and I got very good scores. I started getting piles of mail from colleges. In January, I received an invitation to apply for the Telluride Association Summer Programs. These are for high school juniors, and that year they were

at Williams College, St. John's College (Annapolis), and Cornell University, where the Telluride Association is based. Each was six weeks long and consisted of discussion-style morning classes on the assigned readings. They are free – if you can get in. That year they received 900 applications and accepted 60 people. The application was longer and more rigorous than any of the college applications I have since completed.

I was chosen to attend the program, "What is the Family? Literary Images and Philosophical Accounts," at St. John's College. One of the essays for the application had been on "Plans and Objectives" in terms of education and work. I wrote, "Telluride could be a turning point for me. I think it could show me clearly what college might really be like." I also wrote, "If college is going to be the best thing for me, it will need to do three things. One, to provide me with a safe place to finish becoming an adult. Two, expand my mind to encompass things I haven't ever imagined. And three, help me find a way to put what I know and what I can do to effective use." TASP *was* a turning point, and it did convince me that college could provide me with those three things.

In June I had taken the SAT. The next step, as I saw it, was to start sorting through the pounds (literally!) of college mail that had collected in my room. Many people, when they get to this stage, have an easier time of it than I did, because although I knew I wanted a small-ish liberal arts college, I had no particular major in mind.

The first application I did was actually not to a college but to Telluride House at Cornell University, a campus residence which is free if you can get in. This application required only essays since they had my other information on file. In retrospect, I don't think my essays were particularly good. I did make it through the first round of eliminations, and was flown to Ithaca for a weekend interview. While there I got sick with a virus, and my interview didn't go particularly well. I didn't get in, and since I had serious reservations about Cornell, I didn't ever apply to the university.

I decided next to visit the schools I was interested in. I wish now that I had done this during my junior year, instead of being so rushed to fit several weeks of traveling in before the application deadlines. On the other hand, a lot of schools won't let you stay overnight unless you are a senior.

I first visited Hampshire College in Massachusetts. The open house I went to was interesting, but I didn't feel that it gave me a very real impression of what going to Hampshire would be like. I spoke to the Director of Admissions briefly about what I might need to do differently in my application because I was a homeschooler. Since by this point I was planning to graduate from Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, a state organization which grants diplomas to homeschoolers, and I had a transcript, the Director said I didn't have to do anything special. I later noticed this sentence in the application materials, "Applicants who have been homeschooled for part or all of their secondary education must provide a description of study completed, along with any evaluations or documentation available" (in lieu of a transcript). The Director also mentioned that they have had several homeschooled applicants in the past who have been accepted.

The next day I went to Bennington College in Vermont. This was a little peculiar because my hostess and most of her friends seemed to be planning to transfer to other schools. I did get to visit a class, which I think rounded out my impression of the school. I was also interviewed, by a very nice woman who was interested in what I had to say about homeschooling, why I liked it, and the philosophical reasoning behind it. I gave her the names of John Holt and GWS. She strongly urged me to apply and suggested that I would have a good chance of obtaining a merit-based scholarship.

I then visited Vassar College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and Colby College, and for various reasons decided not to apply to any of them. When I went west in February, I visited Reed College in Oregon, which I liked, and Carleton College in Minnesota, which I also liked. In March I visited St. John's, and I attended a seminar, which impressed me, and classes in science, math, and language, all of which I liked.

I ended up applying to Bennington, Carleton, Hampshire, Reed, and St. John's. All of them were sent a cover letter written by my mother, explaining the state requirements for homeschoolers, mentioning my experience with TASP, and telling them what letters of recommendation to expect. I had letters of recommendation from Tutor Marilyn Higuera, who worked with me during the TASP, Susannah Sheffer, editor of GWS, with whom I have been corresponding, Rebecca Subar, whose children I have been babysitting for the last four years, and Cecilia Ricciotti, my Sensei in the Japanese self-defense martial art of Aikido. Howard Richman, the Director of Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, sent my transcript and evaluations along with a letter of recommendation to each college as well.

Because I have a transcript, filling out the application forms was probably simpler for me than it may be for other homeschoolers. The required essays varied in difficulty. I wrote a lot about homeschooling and its effect on me. One or two of the applications required an academic paper which had been graded or commented on by a teacher, and I was able to use papers written at TASP.

A lot of the schools I applied to required or suggested SAT scores. I also took the Achievement Tests, but those scores were not required except by Cornell (where I had thought I might apply).

Filling out financial aid forms was pretty awful. My mother bought several books on the subject. She recommends *Don't Miss Out: The Ambitious Student's Guide to Financial Aid*, by Robert and Anna Leider, which is revised annually.

I was accepted by all five schools. The first thing I did in trying to eliminate some of them was to read over all the brochures and information I had and my journal entries written while I was visiting each school. I eliminated Reed early on because it was so far away and has a nuclear reactor on campus. Hampshire didn't send out its acceptance letters quickly, and I hadn't been very excited by the

(continued on page 37)

Watching Children Learn

Thinking About Competition

Penny Barker (OH) writes:

I was delighted to read in the Focus section of GWS #98 how young people are beginning to consider what value they glean from competition and cooperation. It is an issue with which I've wrestled for years.

When I was young, it was not a subject we considered much. Looking back, it seems that cooperation was something we did without thinking about it – it was simply a part of our lives in the Missouri farming community where I was raised. Competition, too, was a built-in part of our life – our school life. We just accepted it. It came in the form of grades, sports, tryouts for plays and musicals, student council offices, and sororities (the town where I was bused to high school actually had high school sororities!).

Three events stand out as representing competition in the larger world to me as a child: Sputnik, the Miss America Pageant, and Van Cliburn. To my young mind, this is how these events came across: if I get good grades in school I'll be smarter and the Russians won't beat us if we have a war; pretty girls who are good at something they can do in front of other people and also look "right" in a bathing suit get songs sung about them, people applauding them, and they look happy; if you have a talent you can perform for our enemies (those Russians again!), they'll love you for it and you'll get a big ticker tape parade when you come home to America.

Later I began to feel that it wasn't only Sputnik that carried the aura of "beat 'em," but also the beauty pageant and the international music competition. All of these meant someone striving for superiority, and that somehow cut into my young idealistic view of harmony in my world. It wasn't hard for me to deal with this as an individual: I just avoided obvious competitions, and where grades and selection processes based on superiority were concerned, I simply tried not to place importance on them. For example, it was rare for "country girls" to be asked to join the high school sorority, and as a freshman I remember feeling left out because of that. But when I was asked to join the following year, I did so only to prove to myself that it was not something I wanted to be involved in. After going through the whole pledge bit and becoming a full-fledged participant, I quit the sorority and submitted to the membership my philosophical reason for doing so. It was the first time in 25 years that someone had left the sorority of her own accord, and though I know it was arrogant, I remember feeling pleased to have made people think about something they'd always just accepted. Competition gives us the illusion of thinking because someone else – someone in some way larger than us – has gotten this competitive event or situation together, so we think it must have inherent worth. It is not necessarily so.

I think the idea of competition meaning to beat someone out of a spot you want was made graphically clear during the Olympic figure skating competitions this year, when one competitor literally attempted to beat out another with a stick to the legs. I thought this would say a lot to people about competition, and in Canada it did. There were quite a few forums around that time concerning how the Canadian people viewed the value of competition for young people. The consensus was, why should so much money back one person's endeavors (an Olympic hopeful) when the money could be spent to give many young people a chance to participate in physically challenging activities?

While I was listening to this discussion, I couldn't help but think about it in terms of an experience in my own family. We have asked people to contribute to a sponsorship fund in which my daughter, Maggie, is raising money (she needs $10,000) to participate in an international sled dog race through the Italian alps. She would be the first female from the lower 48 to do this, and that was part of the appeal we made when we asked for the sponsorships. Since listening to some of the Canadian forums and talking about the issue with Maggie, I've been thinking about how $10,000 could be used to help the Canadian First Nation's young folks get involved with sled dogs. Dogsledding was their people's earlier form of transportation and the weather and environs of Canada are supportive of this sport. More important, because there is such a problem with teen suicide among the native peoples of Canada, I wonder if it wouldn't be better or more efficient or worthier for this money to support a much larger number of young people, rather than just one person's involvement with dogsledding. When I discussed this with Maggie, she felt concerned too. It seemed healthy that she was able to explore the issue rather than just defending a choice she had previously made.

Maggie is the one of my five children who has chosen to compete with her work. During her second year of dogsled racing she was racing with an army captain from North Dakota. The captain's wife said to Maggie, "My husband doesn't care if he wins or not; he just does it for the fun of it." Maggie told the woman that she, herself, did it to see if her dogs could win, and that otherwise she'd stay

home and run dogs on the forest trails with other mushers. The captain's wife looked surprised at this. Maggie told me that saying she did it just for fun or to see if she could beat her own time would all be statements of false humility and a way of rationalizing the truth of the competition, which was to try to beat the other racers.

I remember that my oldest daughter, Britt, was always adamant about not competing in music, feeling that competition separated her from people she wanted to make music with, not against. She also felt that in a piano competition, she and her music would be under the subjective judgment of another. This is different in some ways from Maggie's competitions, where the winner is determined by a very objective finish line. Maybe this is why I've been able to live with Maggie's choice to compete, though I didn't think I'd be able to when she first presented me with it. I still see detriment even in objectively judged competition, but somehow it doesn't carry with it the outside validation and approval that subjectively judged competition does. When you put yourself in the position of being judged by others, you become uneasy about trusting your own perceptions and feelings about your work since there is always the chance that they will differ from those of people who give you legitimacy. When they do in fact differ, it can be a kind of psychological annihilation.

Britt, who was considered a virtuoso pianist as a child, did not pursue the music competition trail but still loves her music. She seems to maintain a consistent level of happiness in her life and in her music with her Suzuki piano students and the recitals she gives for them and their parents. She is also an excellent beginning cellist.

In talking with Maggie about competition, I've come to feel that competing gives one a goal to work toward, an external incentive, but it is a kind of manic high that means you have to keep competing to feel happy, whereas if you learn to be happy with your own assessment of what you do, it leads to a kind of satisfaction that nothing can disturb. Maggie suffers from more ups and downs of mood than Britt ever did, but then she always has. Is the competitive part of her nature responsible for this and does the fact that she's involved in competitions accentuate it? I wonder. To know Maggie is certainly not to know an aggressively competitive young woman. She doesn't overflow with competitive vibrations. Only in a race does she compete, and I have considered that this may be the healthiest outlet for a person with this aspect to her personality.

Maggie's own ambivalence about competition can be summarized by a couple of paragraphs from an article that freelancer Kathy Prentice wrote about her in the *Detroit Free Press Magazine*: "She's glad to finish her race season. She prefers to run with a goal, a finish line, for herself and for her dogs. New courses enliven her sport, but the competitive edge is sometimes too sharp. It's a balance that she's been struggling with over the past five years. ... Barker plans to return to the racing circuit; she's thinking about the Superior Circle. But for now, [she says,] 'There is life beyond the race. Sometimes it's easy to forget that when you're out there.'"

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Volunteering at Radio Stations

Earl Gary Stevens (ME) writes:

When we are at home on a Saturday evening we usually tune the kitchen radio to *Prairie Home Companion*, Garrison Keillor's old-time radio variety show. During two hours of music and humor and stories we might bake cookies, do a little work on a puzzle, or just sit around with smiles on our faces. After several years of listening to *Prairie Home Companion* my son, Jamie, desired to go on the air himself and entertain people. All he needed was a microphone and a radio station.

We also listen occasionally to WMPG, our local community FM radio station, affiliated with the University of Southern Maine. WMPG is round-the-clock community radio, broadcasting shows which are most often hosted by the individuals who dream them up.

Jamie was 11 when he decided to go to WMPG and volunteer his services, any services. He walked the four blocks to the station and told them that he was available and willing to do any kind of work - sweeping, filing, talking into microphones, whatever they had. A little while later he called to tell us that he wouldn't be coming home for a few hours because he was working at the station. After learning more about the situation and feeling comfortable with it, we wished him luck, and he began a relationship with WMPG which has lasted until this day.

After a week or so, during which Jamie was filing and labeling and getting to know everybody, the woman who co-produced "Chickens Are People Too" asked him if he would like to try hosting the show. With the bravery of the young and the non-schooled, he immediately nailed down a date and floated home to tell us about it. From clerical work to hosting "Chickens" in less than a month!

"Chickens Are People Too" is a Saturday morning children's variety hour of recorded music, poetry, and stories. It is hosted each week by a member of a small group of kids who are able to read a script and are comfortable enough in front of a microphone to deliver it. They take turns, and some weeks one kid does the show, while other weeks two of them share it. All of them make mistakes and get tangled up occasionally, but it's OK. The show is not supposed to be practiced and slick. Kids are welcome to contribute to scripts and to bring something of their own personalities to the show.

At first Jamie was pretty generous with mistakes and tangles, but after a few shows he could host a "Salute to Independence Day" or to "Friendship" or introduce "Mr. and Mrs. Fish" without too many hitches, and he felt comfortable enough to crack a few jokes of his own. Before long he was also helping out with spot announcements and making guest appearances on other shows. As he worked in front of the microphone he became interested in learning how to use the production studio and the equipment for splicing, mixing, and recording. He took a production studio course offered by the radio station and in due time was presented with his own key to the studio.

Jamie's interest in radio entertainment led to an acting part in a radio play and then to parts in four productions of the Mad Horse Theater Company's Children's Theater. Jamie performed in *Matilda*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, and *Charlotte's Web*. Now at age 13 he is talking about the possibility of producing and hosting his own community radio show. Perhaps he could fit the show in somewhere between "My Vinyl Recliner" and "Eastern Sands Radio."

Almost a year after Jamie's first day at WMPG I happened to run into the station manager while he was standing outside the station. When I introduced myself as Jamie's father, he smiled and began talking about Jamie's first visit. "It isn't often that we get a kid his age begging us to put him to work. We could see that he was very passionate about wanting to be one of us, so we gave him a tour and found him a job. We all appreciate his spirit; he has energized us, and he has made a difference at the station."

What a wonderful experience this has been for Jamie! He has hosted more than 30 radio show broadcasts, met interesting young college students who became his friends, found a niche for himself on the university campus, became involved in theater, and made many positive discoveries about himself. Occasionally he meets an adult who isn't respectful to kids there, but nearly everyone has been glad to meet and work with him. I think homeschooled kids are typically more comfortable meeting and working with adults than are schooled kids. This in turn makes adults comfortable and interested in establishing relationships with them. Jamie's positive experiences are common in my support group.

While there may not be a radio station like WMPG in every town, volunteer opportunities can be found. They may have to do with public service or the local library or an environmental group or a museum or a theater group or a small publication. I don't think it matters too much what the focus is on as long as kids are freely acting on their own interests. What really matters is caring about something and working alongside others to make it better.

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And from Christian McKee (WI):

When I was 12, I was interested in working in the news department of a radio station, so we called Wisconsin Public Radio and told them I wanted to volunteer. They gave us the number of someone who was in charge of volunteers. She agreed that I could come in once a week. For the first couple of weeks I clipped, out of the local newspapers, news stories that had to do with state government. That got boring pretty quickly, so I asked if I could do something else. I was given the job of working with the reel-to-reel machine, taking short spots and splicing them together into longer segments, and then entering that information onto the computer so they would know what little stories were on the bigger reel. This was still fairly boring, but I had fun talking to the reporters who were in the room where I was working.

After I had been doing this job for about a year, I tried asking if I could do anything else, and my father also called a couple of times asking if there was any possibility of my moving on to another job. The volunteer coordinator didn't seem too keen on working with kids, and her answer was pretty clear: no, this was as far as my working there could go. So I decided that working at this station was no longer worth it to me, and I began to think of how I could work in radio some other way.

My father and I remembered that a friend of his had an interview show on a small community station. We called this friend up and she said I was welcome to volunteer. I began by observing. On Tuesday evenings, during her show, I would sit and watch the engineer run the board. This station was much more fun and more informal than the other one, and I learned a great deal from watching the engineer. I picked up a lot of the skills that I use now, and I gained more from watching than from the couple of hours of formal training that I had later.

When I told our friend that I wanted to do more, she couldn't help me but she gave me the name of the news director at the station. He was very helpful. He had me come in Wednesday mornings. At first my job was to take the spots that we had gotten off the satellite and preview all sorts of short news stories. Then I would program a news magazine show that the station ran on Monday evenings. The director would give me some guidelines, like, "We need one story on this, and another on that," and I would choose which ones to use and put together the program. I also wrote out the introduction, and then the director would put it all together.

Christian McKee at the station

I was about 13 or 14 by this time. The news director had gotten interested in radio at a young age, too, so he was very understanding and patient with me.

At this point I decided I wanted to do some on-air work. The news director was the on-air personality on the news magazine show that I had been programming. So I was allowed to engineer the recording of that show onto a reel. I'd play the music, the first story, and so on. I liked this work so much that I said I wanted to do more of it, and I was lucky – the Thursday evening news engineer was leaving at just the time that I became interested in doing more on-air work. So I took transmitter training, which is mandated for anyone wanting an FCC license. I got my license and signed on as the Thursday evening engineer.

I'm now 16 and have been doing that job for about two years. It entails playing three of the prerecorded shows, and then, the most exciting part is that recently the station started a local news show. It's the only local news on the radio around here, and it's a half an hour of really intense live radio. I sit upstairs in the studio and cue up all the music that's going to be used, check to make sure all the microphones are in working order, I talk to the hosts and clear stuff with them, get all set up, make sure the phones are working if we're going to be having a phone interview. Just before we go on the air we have a big prebroadcast meeting in which we run over the script. We have a script that delineates who talks when and what music goes on the air, and in the meeting we read over that and correct any mistakes.

Right now I'm very happy with my level of involvement with radio, doing this show once a week. I've been mulling over the idea of adding another evening show to my schedule this fall, however. I don't see myself making a living in radio as an adult, but I really enjoy the work now. I've learned how to work under pressure and to work with people whose style is different from my own. I'm a current events buff, so that was why I chose to work in the news department, but my fascination is with the medium of radio, and I think I'd choose to work in some other area of radio before I'd choose to work at a newspaper, for example.

As a young person working at the station, I've been really well received. I think the only time I encounter any skepticism about my abilities is when we get a guest expert on the show. I come in and say I'm the engineer, and some people look startled when they realize that they're in the hands of a young person. But most people overcome that quickly. All the volunteers at the station are older than I am, and I've never felt that they distrusted me.

Focus

Creating Helpful Schedules

Deciding On a Weekly Plan

From Julie-Ann Trudel of Vermont:

From the time I was a baby until now, I have never really had a schedule, with the exception of having a violin lesson every week, going to the library, meeting with a group of other homeschoolers, and doing my morning household and farm chores. I also have newsletter deadlines (I write for three newsletters) and farmwork (such as having, feeding, etc.) The rest of my time can be spent freely, the way I want to spend it.

Now that I am going into the sixth grade, though, I feel that I would like to learn more formal stuff, and I don't know where to start. I want to learn and do so many things and study subjects like French, geography, biology, chemistry, fractions, grammar, and music theory. I don't know where to start myself and I can't seem to find the time for everything. I would like to have someone lead me into these subjects until I can get a grip on managing my time myself.

So, I thought up a plan! I will have my mom write up a lesson plan every week for me, say every Saturday. I will do the work during the week, turn in the assignments at the end of the week, and have my mom give me a new lesson plan. This kind of schedule will be advantageous to me because it makes more time for the subjects I want to learn with someone guiding me, and I don't have to do everything at a precise time. I can do it all in a day, I can do it every night for ten minutes before bed, I can do it just when I'm bored, or I can do it any time I feel like it.

This schedule would probably work better for some than for others. In my kind of lifestyle, this schedule would work better for me than a "do this now" or "do this at 3:30" kind of schedule.

The only activity I can think of that can't have a schedule is writing to pen-pals. I have fifteen pen-pals and I can never tell when they will write. It's not really fair to say, "I will write to pen-pals on Wednesday," because what if I get a letter from one on Thursday?

Also, music is a big part of my life. I love being able to practice, compose, and play whenever I feel I can put my heart into it and mean it. If I had to follow a practice schedule (and I've tried it!), I would not be as enthusiastic, and I might have missed out on something that is now very important and special to me.

Schedules don't always work, so it's nice to know that because I'm homeschooled, I can always change to something that will work.

Changing to a Looser One

Lauren Morgan of Louisiana writes:

We have been homeschooling for three years. Our first year was scheduled very much. We did math, science, and so on, one right after the other every day. This wasn't much fun. Of course, we did do a few fun things, but it was scheduled just like school.

In the beginning we didn't realize that if you didn't have much of a schedule you could still learn just as much. Most people think that if I begin doing science at 9:30 and end at 10:30, I'm learning. I now think that you should start when you're in the mood and end when you feel like it. You're not going to remember what you learned if you're tired.

Sometimes it's a little helpful to say, "I'd like to get three things done today." But saying, "I'll allow two hours for each thing" does not suit me. I like to take my time for each.

I happen to enjoy writing, doing science experiments and math, and reading about history. So I do these things. Sometimes when I think I haven't learned much, I might say, "I'll do a good bit of this tomorrow." In my opinion, this allows me to learn more.

Occasionally, my mother plans things for us to do, if she knows it's something we'll like. My sister and I also plan things to do together. We have a sheet of paper on our refrigerator for this. When we think of something we'd like to learn about, we jot it down. We plan time for it later.

This past spring we did not go by any schedule. It was beautiful outside, so we spent a week planting flowers. We did not touch a book, but we learned many things about soil and flower names. We didn't need a schedule to learn that week, and we learned plenty!

Helps Her Reach Goals

From Catherine Bercier of Louisiana:

As fifth to oldest in a family of ten children (seven of whom are learning at home), trying to find special time to do anything is often a project in itself. We constantly have something going on at our house. (My twin sisters, aged 2, usually have a part in these goings on!) Needless to say, organization and cooperation are incredibly important for us, because without them, I believe, nothing much would

ever be accomplished. Also, I have discovered that having a schedule is actually very freeing for me.

For years I existed without any kind of plan. At that time, though, I was not really in charge of my own life goals, and I had no vision for my future. I just wanted to be free. I guess you could say I was just "kidding around." Now all of that has changed for me. When I was about 12, my mom began to ask me what I wanted to do with my life and how I expected to accomplish that, and I really began to wonder, "What am I going to do with my life?" I have found that articulating my goals (life goals, yearly goals, and even monthly and weekly goals) has helped me to fine tune these dreams into becoming a reality. Now, at 15, I have daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly tasks to be completed.

Academics are very important to me, so when I make my schedule, my aim is to include reading, writing, and arithmetic every day, but I try not to overload my days, so that I still have time for creative work. Thus, after the three Rs I add whatever I am interested in at the time, with enough freedom in timing to allow for spontaneity. Each morning I check my scheduled "to do" list; then, at our family morning gathering time, we check with each other concerning our day's needs, and I quickly organize when I will attend to each of my day's goals.

I find that this is working very well for me because I can arrange some solid time with my mom for consultation, I can check off what I have accomplished, I can push myself in the areas I feel I need to enrich, and I can still have time for the unexpected. Sure, I get away from my schedule from time to time – life is just too interesting here to have complete constancy. But, certainly, having a schedule for me has been the easiest way to see that my life is really going somewhere.

Works on Some Things Every Day

From Mae Shell (VT):

I don't have much of an academic schedule at all. I do try to work on some things, such as math, every day, but I don't have a specific time at which I have to work on them.

In general, though, my day does follow a rough schedule. I try to get my household chores and projects (academic or not) finished in the morning so that I can ride my horse in the afternoon. Most of the activities that I do in places other than my home (such as babysitting) take place in the late afternoon.

Right now I try to work on the multiplication tables (which I tend to forget if I don't review them) and music (I'm learning a new song on the piano) every day, and I do my daily chores (like watering plants). I'm not very strict about keeping to an academic schedule, nor are my parents. For the most part, it is up to me to make up a schedule and then see it through.

Lately, I've been finding that I *want* to do the things I need to get done right away in the morning, before I get involved in a project. That feeling is sort of a schedule in itself, because if I say to myself, "OK, before you paint, water the plants and feed the dogs," then, essentially, I am making a schedule. It's really easier to get the unpleasant things done right away, as opposed to doing what I feel like doing first and then having those unpleasant tasks still waiting for me. Once I get them out of the way I can enjoy the day and not worry about anything. Following this system, or feeling, I find I get more accomplished than I would if I tried to scatter the chores throughout the day. The system has another advantage, too: my mother doesn't nag me!

When I have a bunch of things I need to get accomplished, I usually write them on a piece of paper on my night table. That works pretty well, but occasionally I get sidetracked and accomplish some things, but not the ones on the list! That is the only time I see a down side to keeping a list – when I do a lot of things, none of which are the things I wrote down. Then, I sort of feel like, "OK, you did some stuff, but you didn't get anything accomplished," even though I really *did* get something accomplished. I just didn't follow the original plan.

Gets Work Done Before Friends Come Home

From Michael Fortunato (MA):

I usually start my morning by getting up at 5:30 AM to do my paper route. It takes me about an hour. When I get home at 6:30, I have breakfast, and at 7:30, I do chores, from about 8 to 9, I read a book. Every week it's a different book. At 9, I start working on math, writing, and English. At 11, my mom reads aloud to my sister and me. Around noon, I have lunch. From 1 to 3, I can work on anything I want, such as art, science, working in the garden, working on the computer – anything! Sometimes I go out to a science or art lesson with other homeschoolers in the afternoon.

My schedule isn't as strict as it sounds. Sometimes I don't actually follow it. I like to get all this work done by the time my friends come home from school. One of the rules in our family is, before I go out and play, I have to get my work done. A schedule helps me know what to do, and to do it. If I didn't have a schedule, I think my work wouldn't be finished by 3:00.

Learning to Budget Time

From Joanna Hoyt (ME):

I have always had a problem with arbitrarily imposed schedules that are implemented without considering my personal needs. When I used to go to school for art, music, gym, and a one-on-one time with one of the teachers, I found the 45-minute periods extremely frustrating. When I set about to learn something, I like to have a good long time to immerse myself in it, and after 45 minutes I would just be well begun and I would be expected to be done for the day.

I also have trouble if the day is filled with scheduled activities. I need some time each day just to be, to do whatever I feel like or just sit and think or sing or read. We live at a fairly slow pace, without many organized, time-slotted activities we need to hurry to. And our schedule is flexible in the extreme.

We have experimented with various schedules. When we tried doing a different subject every day (when I went to school part-time), it had advantages and disadvantages. I could spend a long time on the day's subject if I wanted to, and nobody was going to ring any bells and tell me to please put away what I was doing and prepare for the next subject. And for some subjects, it worked well having them scheduled on a certain day. For example, I might never have done any arithmetic without a scheduled time built in. (I loved most of my learning, but arithmetic I simply detested.) For my writing, however, it did not work so well to have only a certain day of the week to do it. I write best when I feel inspired to, not when a schedule says to; some days I have a strong craving to write, and other days I just don't want to. For other subjects, sometimes a set schedule was helpful and sometimes it was anything but helpful.

When, for a while, I just tried to cover all the different subjects at least once a week, my writing fit much better, and history and science had no trouble fitting. However, the subjects that I put off for last were always French and arithmetic; if we were away and not studying (in an organized way, that is – I don't mean "not learning," because we think you learn by living), I would skip arithmetic. And sometimes it was difficult to remember and carry through what I had learned.

In the year I was 11 or so, I would spend weeks just doing one subject like history or psychology, interspersed with algebra every week or so, so that I wouldn't lose it. The long time periods spent focusing on one thing suited me very well, and I still continue them. I stopped doing writing during our "study time" because I wrote naturally at other times anyway.

Now that I'm 12, I still spend focused periods on certain subjects, but my life has become a little more scheduled, as my mother explains in the letter below. I have never had a problem with being bored, but I often have myriad things I want to do and I don't always remember to take time for them. Organization, whether of my stuff or of my time, has never been my strong point. The main purpose of the schedule, for me, is to make me stop and think about the things I want to get done.

Joanna's mother, Lorraine Hoyt, adds:

While the trend in our lives has been toward a less and less organized schedule, there was an interesting change this past winter. Joanna tends to want to do many things, and she becomes absorbed in whatever she's doing and loses track of time. At the end of a day or week, she looks back and feels frustrated because she never got to play the recorder or read any French or do any drawing or whatever. She talked to me about how frustrating this was, and I told her that one could budget time, like money, to make sure the important things got done. She asked me to help her, and we made a very basic schedule with times for study, projects, play, jobs, etc. Within that framework she still decided what to study and which projects to do, but I helped her just by letting her know that study time was over now or by asking her which projects she planned to do today. She liked that, but was still frustrated about lack of progress in French and arithmetic. So I suggested a month-long experiment of doing half-hour drill in one of those subjects each day. Jo has always hated the idea of drill (and of schedules) but she tried it and even decided to continue after the month was over.

Assignments for Each Day

From Cathy Spurgin of Oklahoma:

My mother assigns me some things to do by the end of the day. I do those things by myself, and then I do some work with my mom in the evenings. I don't use a specific curriculum. We are pretty flexible with textbooks and don't use many right now. If we don't like a certain textbook, we don't finish it. I do math, some literature, vocabulary, writing, German, and geography by myself, and I do Bible, more literature, grammar, science, American history, world history, art, and spelling with Mom.

I do all these subjects regularly, and I guess that's my mom's choice, probably because I tend to procrastinate. A schedule tends to be quite helpful to me when I'm doing the work I do myself, so I can make sure I do everything I'm supposed to do, but it's unnecessary when I do the work with Mom, since we usually just read books about the subjects. With the work that I am assigned to do by myself, I can do it in any order that I want to, but often I like to do spelling first, then vocabulary, then math, then reading, geography, and writing. I set that schedule up by myself.

I think this schedule is great. I feel so free since I don't have to do anything at a specific time.

When a Schedule Helps

From Andrea Pickrell (WY):

I find that a mildly flexible schedule helps me accomplish goals that I have set for myself. I am on a ski race team. I am also trying to qualify for the junior Olympics. In order to do so I have to be extremely focused and schedule myself strictly to practice so many times a week. I can't say that I'm too tired today or I don't feel up to it, because if I do that, I won't attain the skill level necessary to be competitive.

Another example of scheduling occurred last fall when I was frustrated with where I was in my math. I made myself do my math daily at 9 AM with my mom for about an hour. All of a sudden everything clicked, and in a month I had gone through five grades of math. At present I am very satisfied with where I am in math. I know it was due to my realizing that I had to schedule myself rather strictly to accomplish what was important to me.

I try to organize various things on my calendar with specific times and dates. Then things get done on time. I do writing, work on math, and read about history regularly. Science experiments are done more sporadically. However, my mom has bought a couple of neat science experiment books that we are all eager to delve into, probably this fall or winter. My decision to work on these things regularly was made with my parents.

I think it's great to have things scheduled so that they will be accomplished and finished on time. On the other hand, if the schedule gets too rigid, things can cease to be fun. When I was younger, and there were only two siblings in the family, we could easily do things fairly unscheduled all day long. Now that we have five kids in the family, we have to schedule more to get things accomplished. Consequently, we came up with the idea of a Schedule Planner (erasable and goes for 5-week time frames) where we write down the daily chores to be done and rotate things week to week so the upkeep of our home and animals is shared fairly, equally, and age-appropriately. Collectively, we decided on the time to be done with our chores: 9 AM. Moreover, we chose to have my mom's undivided attention for our various projects and goals in the morning, when everyone is freshest.

I find that I have to schedule myself while playing the violin and piano, while working on certain pieces when I am taking lessons or getting ready for concerts. When I am not taking lessons, i.e. during ski season, it's fun to just pick up the instrument and play at my leisure and not have a set schedule. Also, last year my younger sister and I decided to learn to crochet and elected to make some rag baskets for our friends for Christmas. My mom found a lady who could teach us the basics and how to decipher instructions, and then we were on our own. Initially, I picked up my crocheting whenever I wanted to, and found that Christmas was getting closer and closer and I wasn't nearly done with my baskets. Then I had to sit myself down and make a schedule so that I could accomplish what I had initially set out to do.

Works with Mother Each Morning

From Valerie Pickrell (WY):

We have to have our chores done, breakfast eaten, and be ready to work with my mom by 9 AM every morning. Things that we work on with Mom are projects that we have talked about with her. For instance, last fall I wanted to work on math, spelling, reading, and writing, which I did. We did it in more unconventional ways; for example, writing a letter to a friend was spelling, reading, and writing for that day. Cooking once a week entailed all of the above, including math. I typically get done with this work by 10 or 11:00.

I am also on the ski team with my older sister Andrea and my brothers, Michael and Christopher. I have been able to be successful in my Division due to being extremely diligent and focusing on what I want to accomplish.

Sometimes I will get up very early to be done with my chores and "unschool" work by 8 AM so that I can go out and kayak on our ponds or ride my horse for the rest of the day. While kayaking I have been able to watch all the wildlife in the ponds – the geese laying their eggs, the goslings being protected and taught by Mom and Dad, etc. Very exciting! Scheduling myself and being organized has enabled me to do this. I think it's very helpful to be scheduled, because then I know what I have to accomplish for the day and then I can be unscheduled when I work with my dog, ride my horse, or play the piano or violin. Right now a schedule is not necessary for working with my horse and dog as I am not showing them this year. If I decide to show them next year, these activities will have to be scheduled.

I do writing regularly by writing to friends, pen-pals, writing thank you letters, and the like. I also work on math regularly. I read about history fairly regularly; also, my mom reads to us daily, and a lot of what she reads is history and non-fiction. We don't do science experiments a lot, but they are fun when we have the opportunity.

How Unschooling Led to *New Moon* Magazine

Joe Kelly, one of the publishers of New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams, *writes:*

Several times a week, someone will ask me how our family came up with the idea for *New Moon*. *New Moon* is an international, ad-free, bimonthly magazine edited by and for girls aged 8-14. Most of the time, I tell only part of the story. I talk about research (like that of Harvard's Carol Gilligan and Annie Rogers) showing that most girls experience a profound loss of voice and drop in self-esteem as they approach adolescence. I discuss the prevalence of harassment, pregnancy, eating disorders, suicide, alcohol abuse, and other destructive forces in so many girls' lives. I discuss the work of American University's Myra and David Sadker, who document imbedded gender bias in schools which hampers the development of both girls and boys.

Not too often, however, do I have time to explain how crucial homeschooling has been to the development of this magazine. To understand fully how natural – and effective – it is for us adults to "put" the girls in charge of *New Moon*, I have to explain our experience with unschooling and how we, the adults, learned to trust our daughters and follow them where they led us.

Nancy Gruver originally had the idea of a positive magazine for girls, which would celebrate their diversity, rather than perpetuate the dieting/makeup/boys triad of most girls' publications. Nancy and I have 13-year-old daughters, Nia and Mavis, who had a miserable experience in kindergarten. Our neighbors, an evangelical Christian family, taught their three kids at home. This was a bizarre concept to us at the time, as the father was a schoolteacher and we are not evangelical Christians ourselves. But as we struggled with how to respond respectfully to our daughters' school distress, the neighbors very gently, and un-evangelically, talked to us about homeschooling. They even shared GWS with us. After about six months, we took the girls out of school and kept them home for a year and a half.

They went back to public school for grades 1-3, but bureaucracy, boredom, and passivity soon took their toll. The passivity school encouraged in our daughters was especially distressing. As feminist parents, we are raising the girls to believe they could be on equal terms with anyone and active agents in their own lives. With the encouragement and inspiration of GWS, we discussed a return to homeschooling, and the kids decided to do it for fourth grade.

In fairly short order, we were unschooling. Sure, there were times of uncertainty (ours, not theirs) when we bought math books and encouraged the kids to work on them. But mostly we learned the essential lesson of trusting the kids and following them where they led themselves and us. Voracious readers and careful radio listeners, the girls led our mealtime conversation into a range of topics and concepts. From managing their own money to building with Legos, they took advantage of daily life to master the skills of mathematics and spatial relationships. They comfortably interacted and worked with children older and younger, and adults. We saw the growth – and the profound normalcy – of the unschooling approach to life. We learned that we could trust them to accomplish things, be responsible and long-sighted, learn, and give us incredible perspectives on matters large and small. They spoke up for themselves and remained truly connected to their voice, sense of self, and personal agency. By any measure they thrived — even by school's measures. The girls returned to school this year (grade 7) and got all A's.

How does this relate to starting a magazine? Having 11-year-old twin daughters about to enter adolescence was causing Nancy the anxiety many women experience when remembering their own adolescence. Too often, it's a time when what girls expect of themselves and what society expects of them clashes in such a way that many girls limit their futures by giving up their voices and dreams. The problem was that we could not find any practical, accessible resources for our daughters or ourselves. Then Nancy hit on the idea of creating such a tool with a magazine aimed at these issues.

We talked about the idea with our daughters and two of their friends. They were skeptical, but soon we were talking with a wider circle of their friends. Before long, the girls were designing the editorial makeup of the publication.

When we tell this part of the story, people are often amused. "How did you ever think to talk to the kids?" "How can kids do this work?" "Don't they get bored?" "What happens when they disagree, or want to do something you don't want them to do?" "What are you going to do when they get older?" "How can they know what's best for the magazine?" If these questions sound familiar to you, you've probably been homeschooling a while. They are the same sorts of questions friends and family asked us when the girls left school. The answers lie in the real work the girls do – whether unschooling or putting out *New Moon*.

How did we think to talk to the kids? After years of unschooling, it never occurred to us to do anything else. We knew we could trust the girls with a big, open-ended, relatively vague concept. We knew they understood women's issues and problems of girls' self-image, because these concepts had been a part of their real-life curriculum around the dining room table.

How can kids do this work? They do it very well. The media has a hard time believing this. The girls do the work on their own, but they don't do it alone. They are in charge, and we work with them. We don't abandon them to make every decision in a vacuum.

We've been working with our kids

forever and watching them respond. We've learned to trust them. It was very interesting to see that as we began work with the *New Moon* editors who attended school, most of them were passive and suspicious of us. We were telling them that we wanted to work as their peers, creating and producing a magazine together. Our daughters and their closest friends (who knew Nancy and me best) believed us. The other girls didn't, because their experience of non-parental adults was primarily with teachers in a classroom setting. The "default mode" for kids in schools (especially girls) is passivity, with instruction and direction coming entirely from the teacher. Our vision of working together sounded as foreign to these girls at the start as it does to many adults today. They had to come to trust us, and we had to prove we were worthy of their trust. This same pattern emerges every time a new girl joins the editorial board (except for the one other home-schooler on board: a 10 year old who is our most opinionated and provocative member).

Don't they get bored? No, they don't. The girls have a fierce sense of ownership of the magazine and its process, as well they should. Again, it's parallel to the ownership unschoolers feel of their education. What happens when they disagree with each other or with us? We work it out. After covering a Girls Editorial Board meeting, a reporter for the Minneapolis newspaper told us, "This is just like editorial meetings at the paper – only quicker. The kids aren't worried about jockeying for position or hurting someone's feelings. They're honest and direct and know what they want, so they get the work done more quickly than we do where I work."

What will we do when the kids get older? It seems obvious to us. We'll keep doing the magazine. *New Moon* has already taken on a life of its own, so we bring in younger girls to take the place of the older girls who move off the board. In the same way, we expect that the retiring editors, nourished by their *New Moon* experience, will continue to resist sexism, to learn and grow. Again, this is parallel to the ongoing, real-life experiences of unschoolers.

Members of the New Moon *editorial board examine film at the printer*

The most telling question is, how can the kids know what's best for the magazine? The answer is simply, trust them and they do. For example, girls experience sexism and gender bias every day, in school and in the media (to name just two places). Yet, where in schools or in the media are they given a forum to talk about that reality? Until we created *New Moon*, we didn't know of a place. Give kids a safe place to act and speak, and they will show you what is best for them.

When we give talks about *New Moon*, I always speak about the model of child-adult work that we have established. I stress the value this model has for children of all ages, girls and boys. There is so little real work for children to do in this school-centered society. School is an arbitrary place where adults set the agenda without establishing relationships with the kids. Unschoolers are blazing this trail every day by using real life as the curriculum and getting their kids involved in real work, whether paid or volunteer. Every two months, *New Moon*'s editors see the real, concrete results of their work when the magazine is published. The impact on their sense of personal worth is profound. They know they are making a difference in their own lives and opening up possibilities for other girls. That's something few schools can provide.

Our unschooling experience made possible the development of *New Moon* as a truly child-centered publication. It created for our family an internal belief system that intrinsically trusts kids. This is an essential underpinning of what we're doing. It's also something difficult to explain in a few words to the mainstream press. We are very grateful to the unschooling movement for helping us live a dream today and into the future. We can make incredible things happen, large and small, when we work with kids, instead of working for them.

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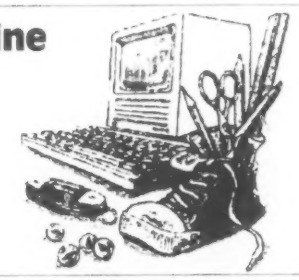

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Rethinking Childhood

Lee Hoinacki is an associate of Ivan Illich (author of Deschooling Society *and other books). In the late 1970s, he and his wife were among the first parents to take their children out of school. This essay is excerpted from a longer work:*

A few weeks after my eighteenth birthday, having just graduated from high school, I left home vowing to myself never to return. I had stuck it out to graduation and could now, I thought, leave in good conscience. Feeling as if I had been narrowly confined too long in a small town, under the control of very provincial parents, I sought to get as far away as possible. I joined the military, attracted by the recruitment promise, "Join the Marines and see the world." Now, almost fifty years later, I see those people and that town very differently – of course! And I think I finally understand something of who my parents were and what they tried to do. At that time, I felt great anger toward them, especially toward my father. Many times I would end a conversation with him, shouting, insulting him, condemning him for what I judged to be his ignorance and prejudice. After having exploded, spouting my adolescent wisdom, I would storm out of the room, not waiting to hear any response from him. Vanity and arrogance infused my anger, but I also felt deprived: he had denied me a childhood.

... Now I see that my parents were trying to save me from childhood, from *modern* childhood. Of course, they would not have said this, could not have explained it. Their attitude and action simply flowed out of their experience. ...

John Holt believed that the unique character of modern childhood lies in this, that it cuts off the young from the adult world, making young people – especially in middle- and upper-income families – a mixture of expensive nuisance, fragile treasure, slave, and super-pet. Well, neither my parents nor I ever experienced any of this. As the historian Phillipe Aries showed some years ago, the modern phenomenon of childhood is a social construction which has its origins in the "rising" middle classes of seventeenth-century Europe. It was a creation of those we now understand as ideologues, and did not extend to the "lower" classes or peasants. ...

In childhood, as it is generally lived among the middle classes today, young people never experience connections – between work and the food one eats; between thought, construction, and the enjoyment of shelter; between activities and a place, leading to the bonds tying one to that place; between themselves and the adults in their lives. And most young people have no daily experience of being needed, of genuinely feeling that the work of the household could not be finished without them; of knowing that not to participate in this work is to cut oneself off from oneself, that is, from one's integral self, from one's immediate community, the family.

They apparently recognized that they were not simply being used, that the work was necessary.

About fifteen years ago, thinking these thoughts, and looking at our two young children, then about seven and eight, I came to see that we were giving them a childhood, searching for the best school, looking out for the "cultural" events in the city for very young people, always on the watch for "enrichment" experiences to feed them. Although I did not understand what was happening, both to them and to us, their parents, I felt that something was wrong, something was not good. In spite of what I had learned as a child, in spite of my father's advice, I had acquired not a constructive skill but a Ph.D. and worked, not in terms of anything remotely resembling subsistence, but for a university. Our children were being poisoned by childhood, I was becoming ever more helpless by employment, but I was not perspicacious enough to see this clearly. I only had my suspicions; happily, they were just barely enough.

This was when I quit my job as a professor of political science and gathered up a collection of my father's old, but well-cared-for, hand tools and set out to practice those skills I first learned as a child: how to use a level, hammer, and saw, how to work with chalk lines and a plumb bob, which wrench was required for which task.

We wanted to make ourselves as independent as possible of the economy. Taken out of school, going to live in a tent until a house was built, the children saw what had to be done to protect oneself from the rain, to dispose of human waste, to plan and construct a dwelling. To the extent they were able, they learned carpentry, wiring, plumbing, how to grow food, how to care for livestock. Our new home was a passive solar design – which worked out well – but in the coldest weather needed some supplemental heat. And we prepared our food on a beautiful old-fashioned cook stove, which required wood. So logs had to be cut up and split. I had two saws, a one-man and a two-man crosscut. I suggested to the kids that they take turns on the other end of the two-man saw. They had no objection! So each day after lunch we sawed two or three logs. They apparently recognized that they were not simply being used, that the work was necessary, and they later enjoyed sitting in front of an open fire in the heating stove, directly enjoying the fruit of their labor.

One aspect of what I did, though, was not good. I did not sufficiently trust the kids. We tried, in subtle and sometimes direct ways, to organize their learning. I suggested that they do some math each day; I studied annotated bibliographies of children's books and picked out some "better"

books for them to read. Each week we visited a local public library, where they themselves were allowed to select most of what they read – a rather large stack of books each week. I suppose that, seeing their parents read, and having no television, they naturally picked up books. ...

I had not yet read John Holt. After reflecting on my own experience as a young person and on that of my kids out there in the countryside, I now know that Holt's position must be seriously considered:

"Young people should have the right to control and direct their own learning, that is, to decide what they want to learn, and when, where, how, how much, how fast, and with what help they want to learn it. ... A person's freedom of learning is part of his freedom of thought, even more basic than his freedom of speech. If we take from someone his right to decide what he will be curious about, we destroy his freedom of thought, we say, in effect, you must think about not what interests and concerns *you*, but what interests and concerns *us*. ... It did not occur to them [the framers of the Constitution] that even the most tyrannical government would try to control people's minds, what they thought and knew. That idea was to come later, under the benevolent guise of compulsory universal education." (from *Escape from Childhood*)

From my experiences, I now know that I and my children learned best, and selected better things to learn, when left alone, to be on our own. Holt was right: kids are naturally curious, eager to learn, will learn by themselves, and generally need no "teaching" until they ask for it. For example, I once noticed the kids, ours and our neighbors', busily at work on some project. I asked them what they were doing. "We're putting out a newspaper," they said. The paper had pen drawings, rubbings (which they themselves discovered how to make by placing a piece of paper on a surface having a bas-relief, then "rubbing" a pencil or crayon across the paper), and various categories – news, feature story, comics and sports, with each person responsible for one of them. I was not aware that the kids had ever looked at a newspaper. A local weekly arrived in the mail, but I never suggested that they read it or study its conceptual order. Since we lived at great distance from most neighbors, the kids could deliver only three or four copies. But each one was handmade; it would have been difficult to produce more. And they expressed no desire to do so. A calculation of number did not occur to them (how do we get this out to more people, and more efficiently?). They showed no trace of a modern ethos. A day or two later, they were busily involved in another project, which they themselves had thought up. And with the various activities and projects, they seldom came to ask for special materials, and never sought to be taken someplace. They generally managed to exercise a great deal of imaginative improvisation. And in all the time we lived in the country, I do not remember them ever coming with the complaint, "What is there to do? I'm bored."

... In their bones, in their flesh, my parents knew that modern childhood is bad; it serves today as an introduction to addictive-like dependence on consumption, on receiving various packages from professional experts and market managers. This kind of rearing of the young almost infallibly produces grown-up ex-children who are never satisfied, who have no sense of what is enough, who see no wisdom in Thoreau's notion of the minimum, who cannot find happiness in a lifelong dwelling in one place, rejoicing in an ever deeper appreciation of its wonders. Today's adult children are mobile, continually on the move, seeking a new job, a different city, and then buying travel packages to "exotic" and "interesting" vacation spots to relieve boredom and affirm their social status among peers. ... I am a slow learner, but I have finally recognized that [my parents'] wisdom enabled them not only to live well, giving their children a daily example of virtuous lives, but to dumbly and bravely resist the "respectable" currents which would suck their children into childhood.

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Celebrating 100 Issues

We – Pat Farenga and Susannah Sheffer – are often asked how we came to know John Holt and to be involved with this work. In honor of GWS's 100th issue, we are sharing our stories with you.

Pat Farenga's story:

For 17 years and 100 issues now, GWS has shown how each family and each child can create their own education with no two being exactly alike. For some, unschooling is an experiment for a few months; for others it becomes a way of life. For me, unschooling began to make sense not when I had children, but when I was single and started working with John Holt.

I started work at Holt Associates in 1981 as a volunteer. I came in during the evening to pack books, type labels, or work with subscriptions. My day job was as assistant manager in a downtown Boston bookstore. I viewed my volunteer work as a way to learn new skills to get a better job. My network of friends led me to volunteer at Holt Associates, which was located just a few doors away from where I worked. I thought learning word processing and clerical skills to gain a job in one of the corporate office towers would be a good way to support my writing and hold me over until teaching positions became available. At that time, there were teacher layoffs all over Massachusetts, and finding a position as a neophyte meant competing with teachers who had just been laid off and who had many more years' experience than I.

One night when I was volunteering, John Holt was also working. His desk was a typing table with a big Olivetti word processor spanning its length. Papers were in small piles all over the floor and on flat surfaces nearby; books and publications filled the shelves or were bunched next to chairs.

I noted how John sat at his word processor, typed a few sentences, stopped, then looked out his office window to the busy street below. So that's how a real writer writes, I thought. John was a fit, gentle man in his late fifties, his remaining white hair almost always in mild disarray, his shirt's breast pocket bulging with eyeglass case, pens, and a little memo pad he jotted ideas in; a paper clip was often attached to this pocket as well. Some time later that evening John took a break, walked into the shipping area, and engaged me in conversation. Where was I from? How did I find out about Holt Associates? Did I work or was I still in school? What did I want to do with my life?

"I want to be a school teacher," I replied.

John's eyebrows raised a little. "Why?" he asked.

"Because I like working with children."

John looked me square in the eye when he spoke. "Pat, you got it all wrong. In school you won't work *with* children, you'll work *on* them."

His comment stunned me. Intellectually I felt I had to challenge what at first seemed an unsupportable remark, but emotionally, based on my experiences as student and a brief experience as an apprentice teacher, I knew there was some truth in what he said. I remembered my own resistance to various teachers' efforts to make me learn something, particularly when I couldn't see the purpose or utility of what I was being made to learn. I also remembered my own work as a student teacher trying to "motivate" twelve-year-old boys to learn grammar. I decided that I had better think and read some more before challenging such a statement by John Holt. I nodded my head a bit to him, then changed the topic.

The first book by John I chose to read, *Teach Your Own*, became slow going for me about halfway through it. So many of the ideas in it were counter to everything I thought education and schooling were about that I challenged nearly every sentence in it. The stories from homeschooling families struck me as a trickle of anecdotal evidence at the time. I put that book down and picked up *How Children Fail*. This was the book that connected me to John's ideas, since it was grounded in the classroom, written by a teacher who always made an effort to understand what it was like to be a student. Since I went straight through school, kindergarten through graduate school, without ever questioning the school process or taking time off, I appreciated John's exposition in *Fail* of "the school game," where students go through the motions to show they learned something only to forget most of it as soon as the grades are given. It registered with me, based on my own school experiences, that *How Children Fail* was the most honest analysis of schooling I'd encountered. After discussing that book with John (Oh, did I ask some really naive questions, and boy did he exhibit tact and patience with his answers!) I felt ready to go back to *Teach Your Own*, which I now read with ease.

In due course I was meeting homeschooling families and various friends of John's who visited the office. These were people for whom homeschooling made sense and worked. I remember thinking after meeting such families, "Their children don't seem any different than the children I know who go to school…". I picked up issues of GWS and randomly read through them at work; the trickle of evidence I first perceived in *Teach Your Own* became a torrent of testimonials to the practicality and usefulness of homeschooling. I eventually saw that the writers to GWS were not thumbing their noses at the education establishment, as I sometimes felt in those early days of my resistance to homeschooling, but were instead deeply interested in nurturing their children's learning and discovering ways to help them learn that could never be attempted for long in any school.

As Holt Associates grew and I

came up through its ranks I eventually got my own office. There John would often sit in a comfortable chair, reading his mail or a book, and we would sporadically talk about all sorts of things – politics, music, fiction, our families. Some conversations lasted minutes, others hours. Looking back on these talks, some of which I remember vividly, I realize how in many ways they are more important to my understanding of John and his work than reading all his books. This is yet another piece of my understanding ... that important, life-changing learning takes place in many ways other than in the classroom.

"It isn't so much what children are taught, but how they are treated that determines what sort of person they will be," John once said to me. I chew on this thought a lot now that I have three of my own children, and I realize that so much of what we actually do to children in the name of education, or "for their own good," is often at odds with what we tell them.

The more homeschoolers I met, and the more I spoke with John, the more I found my previously held beliefs about education were shaken to the core. I believed that school is where you had to go to learn the really important things in life. After all, everyone's got to go to school because school makes you learn. But I had to put this belief against the reality I faced in the Holt office: that children learning at home do just as well as those who go to school, and in some cases homeschoolers seemed to me to be doing better. I believed that school best educates children about themselves, how to get along with others, about their local and national culture, the world, democracy, and freedom. But if this is so, if school is so good and beneficial, why must we force children, by law, to attend? Why do we assume children won't learn these things as they grow up with the same curiosity and determination with which they learn to walk and talk? What are we teaching children about democracy and freedom by forcing them to learn under threat of failure, expulsion, and, in some cases, physical punishment? What message is this type of education sending to our children about our culture, our world?

By questioning these and other assumptions of professional education, I soon found that some friends were reluctant to talk with me about my work or school anymore. Looking back, I think it must be twice as difficult to imagine how homeschooling can work if you are young, single, and fresh out of school. I was also probably strident with my newfound insights about education, which didn't help communicate my points. But even as I toned down my rhetoric I still found it hard to discuss homeschooling with many of my friends and family; I was now an education heretic and my apostasy caused discomfort for many in my circle. I became grateful that GWS offered me not only sanctuary, but camaraderie, for my new beliefs. Now, thirteen years later, facing the publication of GWS #100, I feel how important each letter to GWS has been to me. All of John's writings and conversations with me would have remained idealist abstractions, in much the way *Teach Your Own* first came across to me, if I hadn't had them reinforced by meeting homeschoolers in the office and through letters in GWS. I remember the calls from various states to have John testify before their legislatures as families joined together to get favorable homeschooling laws passed, and the constant traveling John did addressing groups, legislatures, and universities in Europe and almost every state in America. Homeschooling turned from a theoretical abstraction into concrete social and educational action for me in those early years; if it hadn't, I probably would now be working elsewhere.

Sharing the inherent structure of our lives with one another in GWS is quite a personal risk; it's much easier to talk about "units of study completed" than to describe how we allow a child to spend a week collecting bugs in the backyard, or how we mediated an argument between our children over who gets to use the computer first. Freely discussing our joys and sorrows as teachers and learners is empowering and humbling for us all; I can't thank you enough for sharing yourselves with us over the decades. It certainly has made a crucial difference in my life.

Susannah Sheffer's story:

Dad, can you write to an author?" I asked my father, meaning, is it possible?

"Sure," he said. "Just write care of the publisher."

I thanked him and scurried off to my room, where I curled up in a chair, wrote "Dear John Holt," and began to explain to this man I had never met why I agreed with what he said in his books, and to describe what it was like to agree with him and at the same time attend the ninth grade. It was important to me to explain myself in words that would make him understand that I wasn't just a kid who wanted to get out of school. I wanted him to know that I felt I really understood his books, as well as he hoped any adult reader might.

Though I had begun, four years before, with *How Children Fail*, taking it down from my parents' shelf out of idle curiosity and then being drawn in as I read the stories of fifth graders in their classroom, by the time I sat down to write to John Holt I had read his latest book, *Instead of Education*, and all the books in between. When people heard that I was reading John Holt they often told me that his first two books were good but that after that he "got too radical," so I was surprised to find myself keeping pace with him, agreeing every step of the way, thinking that the books were only getting better and better. By the time I finished *Instead of Education*, I had decided that I was firmly in John Holt's group five (for the purposes of discussion John had summarized five different attitudes toward schooling), the group whose attitudes about school he summed up as follows: "The schools have basically bad purposes; they cannot be made good places for children, for teaching, for learning, intelligence, or growth, until those purposes are taken away from them...". After describing the beliefs of those in group five, John had written, "There may be no one else who feels this way except me. If there are, I hope through this book to find out who some of them are." I naively imagined that I might be among the first to answer that call, and so, as I say, I had the audacity to write to him not only

(although also) as a teenager asking for support and understanding, but as a kindred spirit, a colleague.

Years afterward, people remarked to me that it was unusual for a ten year old to pick up an adult book and find it interesting. John would have laughed at how that remark underestimated ten year olds, and he would have said that he was glad to know that he wrote clearly enough for ten year olds to understand him. Browsing in a leisurely, unpressured way through a book that was about kids exactly my age, in similar circumstances, never seemed so unusual to me. Of course I would find such stories interesting. I didn't read the book straight through from cover to cover, but meandered through it in no particular sequence until I had read the whole thing. Teachers often wrote to John about how difficult it was to go back to their classrooms after reading his books, because they no longer saw things the same way. The same was true for me. I found myself listening to my teacher and my classmates in new ways. He's right, I thought to myself as I listened to a classmate speak after the teacher had called on her. We do use a different tone of voice when we speak to the teacher. We do try to figure out what he wants us to do.

Of course, not everything in *How Children Fail* was news to me. Much of it seemed obvious to a student practiced in exactly the sorts of strategic maneuvers that John described in the book. When he took a whole passage to figure out that he had inadvertently given two girls the answer to the worksheet question by responding incredulously to their attempts to fish for the answer, I thought, "Well, of course." When he tentatively wondered, in a memo to his fellow teacher Bill Hull, whether the students might not in some instances merely be mouthing words to fit formulas without really understanding them, I thought, "Good for you, you figured that out." I did wonder how this particular teacher happened to be so good at figuring out what school was really like for kids, and I wondered why my own fifth grade teacher seemed not to have caught on. (I thought about giving him a copy of the book but had far too little nerve.) *How Children Fail* didn't turn me into a bad student or even, outwardly, a rebellious, questioning student. It only turned me into a conflicted, perhaps hypocritical student, who played the game well but doubted its value more all the time.

By the time I had finished *Instead of Education* and was sitting in my room writing to John Holt, this double life had become quite difficult. In my high-pressure high school, with one's grade point average already a major preoccupation, the gap between what I did every day and what I truly believed was enormous. I wrote to John Holt in part because I didn't know what else to do about that.

John's reply, when it finally came, was a perfect illustration of his attitude toward young people. It had taken me three tries before my letter even reached him, and in his reply he said, "I can't imagine what could have happened to your two earlier letters. I am quite conscientious about answering letters, and particularly from young people – not for any sentimental reason, but because I know they think that adults don't usually take them seriously, and I do." It wasn't until I was able to read through all of John's correspondence files, many years later, that I learned I had not been the only high school student to write to John Holt. Far from it. But he made me feel that he was reading my letters carefully and thinking about my specific situation nonetheless. In that first letter he went on to say, "People in what we call Group Five are very rare, no doubt about that. And I sympathize very strongly with you, being in the middle of it. I would only say, try to outsmart them! That is to say, try to figure out ways to get as much as possible of what you want from the school, meanwhile wasting as little as possible of your time and energy in doing what you don't want." After continuing about this for a bit, he concluded, "I wouldn't waste a lot of energy in fighting school. Save it for the important parts of your life."

Even as I read John's letter I knew that doing as he advised was not going to be easy, and indeed it never was. Saving it for the important parts of my life while continuing to go to school every day and satisfy those requirements – and at the same time live in a world that thought school *was* the important part of any young person's life – was difficult right up until I graduated from college. But it was extraordinary to me that John could make the distinction between school and my real work, could encourage me to make it too, and never doubted which was more important.

Looking back on it now, I see that John was a master at responding to whatever the particular writer had asked. I had not asked him how to get out of school altogether. I didn't know that homeschooling was an option or that he had already turned most of his attention to it. Even when I learned that, I never brought up the possibility of leaving high school. What I had asked him was how to survive while in high school, and he gave me the best advice he knew.

At the end of that first letter he said, "Do feel free to write whenever you want." That simple sentence probably ended up having more significance than anything else in the letter, because without it I might have treasured the one letter and left it at that. Instead, with his invitation, I continued to write to him throughout the years, and it's safe to say that if I hadn't kept up that correspondence I might not – clichéd though it sounds to say – be where I am today. No wonder I think letter-writing is so important, and now encourage homeschoolers to cultivate relationships even with people who don't live close by. You never know what can happen!

In his second letter to me, John again approached the problem of how to live as a high school student who disagreed with the notion of schooling and with how young people were treated much of the time. He wrote:

"On this matter of change, I want to repeat something Paul Goodman wrote, that I think I have written somewhere else, but that you may not have seen. During the 1960s many young people were talking about revolutionary changes in society. Paul used to say to them, 'Suppose you *had* had the revolution you are talking and dreaming about. Suppose your side had won, and you had the kind of society you wanted. How would you live, *you personally*, in that society? *Start living that way now!* Whatever you would do then, do it now. When you run up against obstacles, people or things that won't let you live that way, then begin to think about how to get over or around or under that obstacle, or how to push it out of the way, and your politics will be concrete and practical.' Very good advice. The trick is to find ways to put your strongest ideals into practice *in daily life*. I don't mean talking to other people about it, or saying, 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all did this or that.' I mean doing it right now. It is interesting, absorbing, fascinating, satisfying, and useful. You don't have to wait for a hundred million people to agree with you, you can start right away. And when you find that you are able to do something, the very fact that you can do it means that anyone else who wants to can also do it."

It would be years before I understood exactly how much John tried to live "after the revolution" in his own life, to put his strongest ideals into practice and behave as though they were already accepted and acceptable. Much later, after he had died, when I began to explore the material in his correspondence files and to think about making a book out of it, I saw that John's concrete and practical politics and his interest in figuring out what he personally could do was as characteristic of his life and his thinking as anything could be. Meanwhile, his way of looking at things affected the way I lived, even then. If I felt that children weren't often listened to or taken seriously, I could try to treat the ones I knew in the ways I thought children should be treated. If I wished that schools would place less emphasis on grades, I could try to live as though that were already true and try not to judge myself or my friends by grades. Often John's advice about living as though the revolution had already happened wasn't any easier to follow than his earlier advice about saving my energy for my out-of-school life had been. But he gave me something to work with, to try for, to fall back on.

John wrote: The trick is to find ways to put your strongest ideals into practice in daily life. I don't mean talking to other people about it, or saying, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all did this or that." I mean doing it right now.

As we continued to correspond – not always so frequently, but regularly nonetheless – I began to ask John all the usual questions about homeschooling: what happens if kids want to go to school, don't you need credentials in order to get jobs later, what about the social life? Naturally I laugh now to think that I had to ask all these questions and that John had to take the time to answer them. I truly didn't know whether it was possible to get certain jobs without school credentials, or whether homeschooled kids missed the social life that my friends and I believed was so important. The questions I asked John were genuine ones, not the devil's advocate, let's-see-how-well-you-can-defend-yourself sorts of questions that John (and later I) so disliked. But once, when the tone in John's reply seemed to suggest that he was forgetting how strongly I already agreed with him and was thinking of me as another of the skeptics or critics, I protested that I really was one of his allies, wasn't asking these questions to try to find reasons to dismiss homeschooling (quite the opposite).

John responded by saying, "I may have been guilty of the old sin of convincing the convinced. But sometimes experience shows that the convinced need lots of re-convincing. How quickly resolutions fade!" Here, as always, John didn't condescend to me or treat me any differently from the way he treated his adult correspondents. He wasn't too proud to admit that he might have gone too far in trying to convince me of what I already believed. And he was honest enough to admit that other people and other experiences may have affected how he responded in this particular instance.

As the years went by, my hastily scribbled, handwritten letters gave way to typed letters with even margins, and I began to write about the work that I, now, was doing in the homeschooling movement. We began to write as colleagues more than as teacher and student or adult and child. I loved when John thought aloud on the page, or when he made it clear that others' responses to his writing continued to be important to him. When I told him how moved I was by the final pages of the revised edition of *How Children Learn*, which had just been published, he replied:

"Well, I am very glad to hear what you say about the ending pages of *How Children Learn*, the revised edition. Those final pages are, as you point out, in a way quite different from other things I have written. They are perhaps more emotional, or poetic, or something. I certainly wrote them in some kind of white heat of inspiration. They moved me very much at the time, and still do when I read them. It's good to hear that they affected you the same way. Oddly enough, I can't think of anyone else who has mentioned that particular part of the book, which is very important to me."

In all this time I met John only a

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handful of times. The first time was three years after we had begun corresponding, when I was 17 and in my junior year of high school. Though I lived in New York City, which now seems very close to Boston, it had never occurred to me that I could simply travel to visit John. But when my family visited friends in Boston, I took some time to see John in his office. It felt strange to sit and talk with him after only writing for so long. I told him that I was going to be editor of the school newspaper the following fall, and he talked with me about how I could use the paper as a forum for some of my own opinions and as a chance to do some real and meaningful work.

Eventually I would meet John a few more times, and hear him speak in public, but I had many more letters from him than face-to-face meetings, so I knew him in a particular way. I don't have as many memories as other people do of John traveling with his cello and a bag full of books and papers, or of his fascination with everything around him. I have some of these memories, of course, but the John Holt I am left with is mostly the John Holt of books and letters.

It makes sense, then, that when I came to Boston to work at Holt Associates the spring after John died, one of the things I wanted to do was edit a collection of his letters. I had by this time come to understand that I was only one of hundreds of correspondents, and I suspected that if his letters to everyone else were as good as the ones he wrote to me, there would be quite a treasure chest of material. I was right. When I opened the big file cabinet of correspondence and saw the thick folders labeled, "George Dennison," "Ivan Illich," "James Herndon," I realized that John had corresponded with many of the other writers that his books had led me to and that were so important to the thought and activity of a particular era. After spending one morning skimming through the material in these folders, I knew without a doubt that there was a book in that file cabinet.

When (after two years of trying) I found an enthusiastic publisher, I had license to plunge fully into the work on the book, which took the better part of another year. I loved typing the letters into my computer and getting a feel for John's prose in my fingers. I loved hunting down answers to all the questions of detail that a collection of letters has to include: surnames of the people mentioned only by first name in a letter, full titles of books referred to only as "your wonderful book," explanations of how John had happened to begin corresponding with the various people.

As I became more and more familiar with the material in the files, the particular book that I wanted to make out of that material became clearer in my mind. Soon it was easy to read a letter and know whether it belonged in this book or not. I was interested in what it had been like for John to turn his attention and his allegiance away from the idea of reforming schools and toward the notion of doing without schools entirely. I wanted to challenge the idea that it had been easy for John to do this or that doing it was a form of giving up, as some people argued. I found myself choosing letters that in one way or another contributed to this story and answered this question, although I also chose letters that simply showed John's mind at work, revealed what he thought about his books and other people's work and the events of the day. I was also interested in what it was like to be someone who cared so much about making the world a better place, who could quite honestly say that he was depressed because the state of the world looked so bleak. I thought about the motto of the sea that John's old friend Jud Jerome had written in his memorial poem to John: "Keep one hand for yourself, one for the ship," and wondered how and in what ways John had maintained this balance, or failed to.

I don't want to give away the answers to these questions, because that, I hope, is what *A Life Worth Living* ended up being about. Working on the book was a wonderful way of completing the circle, of giving back some of what I had been given and of showing the rest of the world what an extraordinary letter-writer John Holt was.

College, cont. from page 19

school, anyway.

Bennington had offered me a merit scholarship that would have covered most of my tuition and room and board. St. John's and Carleton offered me almost identical financial aid. I had a hard time thinking about the choice at all until I separated out the financial questions. Bennington was very hard to refuse because of the money, but I felt that there was a negative social atmosphere there – not really drug or alcohol problems, which are to be found at almost any college – but something insular and non-accepting of real difference. It took me some time to figure this out. I talked to my mother and several of my friends about it. But by the time I made my decision I was very sure of my judgment.

So I had to choose between St. John's and Carleton. My parents told me that this was my choice, which was very valuable to me – after all, it was to a large extent their money that I was deciding to spend. I did tell myself that this was the minor decision, that choosing to go to college in the first place had been the major decision. Choosing which college to go to was still difficult, though. I finally told myself, "You are going to eat lunch, and go outside and think of 'what will happen' if you go to both schools, and then, you are going to reach a conclusion." So I did, and it was St. John's.

So I am going to St. John's in the fall. I knew about St. John's as a place I might like to go before I even went to TASP, because I had known Emily Murphy, another homeschooler from Pennsylvania, and she is a student there now. However, it wouldn't have been good for me to have just decided to go there, without going through the whole year-and-a-half process of investigating schools. I made the final decision to go there because that school suits the person I have become and am becoming, and I think I became that person partly through the process of investigating schools. Doing all the work of researching and applying to college helped me clarify what I wanted, so that now I feel I'm going to St. John's without any doubts about its being the right thing to do.

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since issue #99. Our complete 1994 Directory of Families was published in GWS #96. Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

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Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Catherine & Michael DORMAN (Claire:89, Eric:91, Leah:93) 36551 Mulberry St, Newark 94560 ••• Kathleen & Randy SPRENGER (Jaclyn:89, Michael:91) 680 Alberta Av, Unit E, Sunnyvale 94087

CT — Beth & Tom KING (Alexandra:85, Emily:88) 37 Wellington St, New Britain 06053 ••• William & Kathryn MULLEN (Nevada:92) 71 Hilldale Dr, Southbury 06488

FL — Rachel & Robert LAYMAN (Trevor:89, Myles:93) 430 Old Spanish Trl, Lantana 33462 ••• James & Anita WATKINS (Cory:91, Kyle:93) 709 S 14th St, Fernandia Beach 32034 **(H)**

IL — Foreli & Mark KRANARIK (Delfini:90, Jeanlu:92) 2132 Leaf River Rd, Mt Morris 61054 **(H)** ••• Jane & Saul MORSON (Emily:89) 215 Adler Ln, Libertyville 60048

IA — David & Mary KENYON (Dan:80, Beth:82, Michael:87, Rachel:88, Matthew:93) 2094 220th St, Independence 50644

KS — Leonard & Stacey STEWART (Heather/90, Cameron/92) PO Box 63, 215 Main St, Dwight 66849 ••• Meryl & Cliff VOGH (Kendall/85) 1010 Colorado St, Manhattan 66502 **(H)**

ME — Denis LEDOUX & Martha BLOWEN (Zoe/80, Max/82) RR 1 Box 452, Lisbon Falls 04252 **(H)** ••• Tina & David PLUMMER (Birch/82, Athena/90, Cassandra/92) PO Box 1614, Rockland 04841

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MO — Charles & Lindsay MILLER (Jaymi/82) Rt 2 Box 680, Richland 65556

NH — Elaine & Thomas LOVEDAY (Alanna/79, Landon/83, Anson/86) 629 Bedford Rd, New Boston 03070

NJ — Robin BROWNFIELD (Michael/80, Rachel/83, Mariel/89, Alexander/93, Marina/93) 824 Eldridge Av, Collingswood 08107 **(H)**

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OH — Laura & David KENNEDY (Mariah/90, Caleb/93) 4220 St Martins Pl, Cincinnati 45211 **(H)**

OR — Don & Nancy BOATWRIGHT (Kevin/80, Bryan/82) 1855 SW Whiteside Dr, Corvallis 97333 ••• Amy OBLAK & Gary David SIEGEL (Eva/92) Ahava Learning Cooperative, 25849 Cherry Creek Rd, Monroe 97456 **(H)** ••• Rich & Cathy ROBERTS (Sean/86, Arik/88, Collin/90, Dylan/92) 18016 Rainbow Rock Rd, Brookings 97415 (change) **(H)** ••• **Lehana & Bill SMYTH** (Roshan/77, Roman/80, Hannah/81, Kaylan/85) 590 Azalea Dr, Grants Pass 97526 (change)

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Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.
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Organization (only if address is same as family):

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UT — Janeen DIMICK (Janae:76) 2740 S 1450 W, Monroe 84754 (change) ••• Kathy & Don HARLAND (Kari:77, Cade:79, Brooke:80, Dan:83) Rt 1 Box 1374, Roosevelt 84066 (change)

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VA — Greg McGARY & Wendy LOWE (Jordan:92) PO Box 508, Nellysford 22958 (change) **(H)**

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Other Locations — Thomas & Karen DROZD (Layla:86, Kaolyn:88, Sage & Auria:90) Drozd/Bdm Int'l, Unit 61323 Box R, APO AE 09803-1323 (**Saudi Arabia**) ••• Candis LITSEY & Ted YOUNG (Evan:82, Sarah:85) 1171 Tower 12, Hong Kong Parkview, 88 Taitam Reservoir Rd, **Hong Kong** (change) **(H)**

Add to the Directory of Organizations:

AZ — Arizona Home Schoolers, PO Box 30504, Phoenix 85046-0504 602-992-8056

Address Changes:

CA — Homeschool Assoc of CA, PO Box 2067, Santa Clara 95055; 408-247-4001

CT — Connecticut Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 250, Cobalt 06414; 203-267-4240

NY — Families for Home Education, 3219 Coulter Rd, Cazenovia 13035

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Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. ••• ZWISSLER, 319 Blue Star Hwy, So. Haven MI 49090: Tom (9) Legos, sports, Scouting; Emma (7) art, music, animals ••• Dillon WRIGHT-FITZGERALD (12) RR #1, Box 124A, Stillwater PA 17878; music, theatre, literature ••• Maggi NORMILE (18) RD Box Box 646, Coraopolis PA 15108; History, DC Talk, reading ••• Danielle TRUDEL (10) RR 1 Box 209, Cabot VT 05647; farming, animals, reading ••• MONTEIRO, PO Box 6001, Bellingham WA 98227: Lyra (12) dance, reading, viola; Neah Lin (10) stamps, dance, cats ••• Kayla JINDRICH (5) 202 E Market St, Palestine IL 62451; sewing, books, photography ••• Erica JAMES (8) 10311 Colony Rd, Wilton CA 95693; ballet, reading, country life ••• HARTLEY, Rt 5 Box 368, Nashville IN 47448: Eliot (10) drawing, Lego, soccer; Dan (8) sports, animals, Nintendo; Cara CORDELL (10) (same address as Hartleys); reading, swimming, drawing ••• MacKenzie SEARLES (6) 105 Pleasant, Mt Carroll IL 61053; horses, painting, gymnastics

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Book Reviews

And Then a Harvest Feast

by George Dennison #3112 $4.50 + s/h

Dennison's book is, upon first glance, a very simple story. Dog, Cat, Mouse, Bird, Bear, Woodchuck, and Stork are the animal characters who decide to leave the city and start life anew in the country. "I can't stand it anymore," says Cat. "I'm off to the woods." So the story begins.

With advice from an old moose, and with seeds loaned from farmers, the animals move into an abandoned country farm. In the space of a summer, they raise a garden which culminates in a harvest feast with all the animals in the forest.

Dennison's characters are happy-go-lucky without being overly sappy. The conversation and use of language is full of humor and wit, and the story will leave anyone chuckling. What sets the story apart is the underlying treatment of complex issues such as peace, democracy, politics, and vanity. Dennison has managed to make a simple, entertaining story that could be read to and by small children into an eye-opening book for adults. It will show us all that we worry too much over things we can do without.

This is one of the best novels I have ever read that deals with the subject of a utopia without climbing into the clouds with scientific or philosophic complexities. The story is about people (or animals, as in this case) coming together and being able to accomplish something despite their differences. Maybe Dennison's story can teach us not to take things so seriously – if we work together, we really can accomplish anything. — Anne Brosnan

Outdoor and Recreation Equipment

by Kevin Jeffrey #3142 $14.95 + s/h

I like to spend time outdoors. Some of my outdoor activities require equipment, but it's hard to know what stuff is really necessary, and what to look for when buying new gear. My local outdoors and bicycle stores are well-stocked, but that can be intimidating.

This book is like a knowledgeable friend explaining what's what and roughly how much money you should expect to spend. The advice is based on the author's personal experiences. He makes recommendations for personal gear, car, and van travel, backpacking, bicycling, canoeing, and kayaking. There is a list of equipment manufacturers with addresses in the appendix, in case your store doesn't have exactly what you're looking for.

I love this book because it helps me be a smarter consumer and be more comfortable outdoors. I highly recommend it. — Ginger Fitzsimmons

Best Places to Go: A Family Destination Guide

by Nan Jeffrey #3116 $14.95 + post.

This book is better than the Jeffreys' other books for someone like me, because the other books are primarily dedicated to outdoor living and camping, which I don't enjoy when I'm traveling. Even though the Jeffrey family really thinks outdoor life is enjoyable, *Best Places to Go* also talks about indoor accommodations at every destination.

This book doesn't focus much on the U.S.. It does cover sailing on the Intercoastal Waterway and traveling in Florida, but most of the book is about the Eastern Canadian provinces, Central America and the Yucatan Peninsula, Europe, the West Indies, Northern Africa, and various islands near each of these areas.

What really made the book enjoyable for me was reading about destinations that are not where most tourists go. The Jeffrey family is also excited about learning about the people who live in each place, and the book gives tips on how to work with the native people in learning their language, eating and preparing food, doing laundry the local way, etc. It's hard to have this kind of vacation if you are staying in a motel and never venturing from the tourist traps.

For each destination the book gives a map and practical information about climate, culture, political updates and safety, food and water concerns, travel documents you will need, currency and language, transportation, laundry and bathing facilities, etc. The book also discusses accommodations and natural, historical, and cultural points of interest. Outdoor activities such as swimming, biking, and hiking are also covered.

This book is very well laid out, and emphasizes the things I care about when I travel: modestly priced accommodations, suggestions about food, laundry facilities, safety, and less well-known points of interest.

Best Places to Go makes a good read for an armchair traveler of any age. But more important, it made me think about traveling to places I had never thought of before.

— Dawn Lease

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Herb Hough of New York writes:

Here are some possible answers to the question, "Why aren't you in school?"

- *I can't be in two places at the same time.*
- *I got a better offer.*
- *I was able to plea bargain.*
- *I'm trying to get to Carnegie Hall.*
- *The light is better out here.*
- *I'm taking my vacation early.*
- *Because they don't have what I need right now.*
- *Because I know where I'm going.*

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Sept./Oct. 1994

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

Issue 101

Families Making Music

See p. 6

Homeschooling in Australia

The Trouble with Rewards

Focus: Grown-Up Homeschoolers with Children

Getting out of the Classroom

Dealing with School Districts

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Contents

News & Reports p. 3-5

Homeschooling in Australia and in Ontario

Families Making Music p. 6-8

Stories about a family recording singing tapes, and a homeschool orchestra

How John Taylor Gatto Got Students Out of the Classroom p. 9-10

Through apprenticeships, community service, and other opportunities, this teacher got students out of the classroom and into the wider world

Challenges & Concerns p. 11-15

How Much to Tell District?, Accepting Child's Temperament, When Labels Help

The Trouble with Rewards: Interview with Alfie Kohn p. 16-19

Why the do-this-and-you'll-get-that approach doesn't work, and what we can do instead

Moving On: College and Work Choices p. 20-21

FOCUS: Grown-Up Homeschoolers with Kids of Their Own p. 22-25

Watching Children Learn p. 26-28

Math, Schedules, "The 20% Solution"

Book Review p. 31

Issue #101
Sept./Oct. 1994

GWS

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by John Holt

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In this issue

Childhood and adulthood are interconnected. When we are on the brink of certain kinds of choices, we are influenced by the way we spent our time as children and by the attitudes we developed. In this issue's Focus, grown-up homeschoolers who now have children of their own talk about how their homeschooling background affects the way they behave as parents. As they care for their children, as they consider whether they will send them to school or not and how they will behave in either case, naturally their own experiences as children enter in.

There aren't yet many homeschoolers who are old enough to be parents, and the children of the ones we interviewed are still young. We'll have to check back in five or ten years to get full answers to some of our questions. But for now, the process is interesting: how are they thinking about the questions? What factors are involved? Often you can learn just as much about someone from the way they make decisions as you can from what decision they ultimately make.

In our last issue we had a section called "Making Decisions About College and Work," and we have a similar section again this time. We may very well have such stories regularly, as more and more homeschoolers reach that threshhold and begin to decide how they will move out into the wider world. We purposely worded the title of the section to reflect this idea that the process of figuring out what to do is as important, as indicative of one's view of the world, as the final decision is. Here the connection between childhood and adulthood comes up again, but in a slightly different way. Parents' feelings about adulthood, and their experiences of it, influence the way they raise their children, even if only indirectly. Raising children is at least in part about helping them to be ready for something, and the question is, what? What kind of life do we think awaits them? What do we think adulthood is like, and what kinds of skills or attitudes do we think young people need in order to be ready for it? Adults communicate this to young people directly and (probably most especially) by their example. Then, when young people are making choices about how to move out into the world, or how to raise their own children, their attitudes about adult life, about their options, and about themselves come into play.

John Holt wrote about the mother of one of his fifth grade students who said to him, "I think you are making a mistake in trying to make schoolwork so interesting for children. After all, they are going to have to spend most of their lives doing things they don't like, and they might as well get used to it now." What we think about how people spend "most of their lives" does indeed influence the kind of life we think children ought to have. Even when children are very young, they're getting a sense from the adults around them of what is (or isn't) possible and what kind of preparation they need. Thus, adults who want to be helpful to children ought not to think only of the children. We need to look closely at ourselves as well.

— Susannah Sheffer

Homeschooling in Australia

We have always been interested to know what homeschooling is like in countries other than the U.S. What issues are similar, and what are different? Over the years we have printed stories about homeschooling in Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, France, Spain, and, most recently, Russia. Often these are stories of individual families rather than reflections from someone in a position to write about that country's homeschooling movement in general, but the following story, from JoAnne Berrie of Homeschoolers Australia Pty Ltd, gives this sort of overview about homeschooling in Australia:

In 1788 Australia was settled by the British as a convict colony, where "criminals" – everyone from religious dissidents to beggars, petty thieves, forgerers, and murderers – were transported to solve the problems of overcrowded jails in Britain. Our "convict" origins have had a significant impact on our laws and ways of looking at things here, and that still affects homeschooling today. Someone once said that in Australia we don't define our freedoms and then frame our laws within those freedoms; rather, we tend to legislate our freedoms, anticipating that we are "bad" in the first place.

The British heritage has had the effect of ensuring that many of our laws were in the spirit, if not the wording, of British laws until about fifty years ago. As far as homeschooling is concerned this has been very good, because British law has always stated that parents may educate their children as long as they provide regular and efficient instruction. In Britain it was traditional that many upper-class parents provided tutors for their children. Schools were set up for the masses, not for rich people. So it happened here that schools were basically set up to control the morality and education of convict children, notably by religious organizations.

Historically, homeschooling in Australia is not so rare, as many mothers scattered throughout isolated regions of the country have always homeschooled their children out of necessity rather than by choice, sometimes using Distance Education materials and link-ups provided by the government. In fact, I believe Australia may be able to take the prize for the first homeschooling book of all time: *A Mother's Offering to Her Child*, by Charlotte Barton, published in 1841. It detailed both educational philosophy and practical lessons for mothers who were educating their children at home.

In 1901, the states and territories of Australia came together as one federation. However, we still elect both federal and state governments. In 1901 the federal government assumed responsibility for supplying money for the education of each child, while the states and territories were to have administrative and practical control in matters of curriculum, accreditation, registration, teacher-student ratios, resources, emphasis, textbooks, etc. Nowadays, the states and territories can use their federal money to maintain significant control over how education is practiced, although equivalent amounts of money must be applied to each child's education no matter where they live.

There are many people who believe that letting each state be autonomous when it came to education showed little foresight. There is still no national agreement on credentials or even curriculum guidelines, which is hard if children move from state to state, which many do. On the other hand, the lack of a national approach to education has been good for homeschooling. It's easier for us to lobby, to make comparisons between various approaches, and to capitalize on the differences in political philosophies that exist. Furthermore, because some states do not have a process for certifying that a student has completed high school, access to jobs has not traditionally been predicated on the school examination process, but rather on workplace examinations and interviews.

As a movement, homeschooling's worst enemies are, potentially, the powerful Teachers Federation who (despite our minute numbers) anticipate we could be a threat in some way, and Education Department bureaucrats who tend to be extremely conservative and concerned about losing any control over the children for whom they feel they are responsible.

An increasing tendency in lawmaking in Australia is to make Acts of Parliament, and the regulations that go with them, ever more proscriptive and descriptive. The ultimate aim is to cover all angles and thus limit costly and embarrasing litigation whenever possible. Legal Aid exists for the very poor, or others in very special cases, and it has been said that the middle classes, due to the huge costs involved, are denied access to the court system to redress "rights issues."

This affects homeschooling. Because it is difficult for us to get a hearing in court, support groups try hard to keep a close eye on what the politicians are up to. If there is a scent of something changing, we call or write, ask why, and insist on being involved in the process right from the start. We might or might not use civil rights groups, academics, and the media in the process.

In Victoria, this meant that a proposed change in the legislation was dropped altogether in 1992, after much effort by homeschoolers. In New South Wales it meant that in 1990 we had horrible legislation (which had passed in 1987) rewritten in greatly improved form. In West Australia it meant that homeschoolers did a lot of ongoing negotiation to make sure that proposed regulations will be continually assessed, for a five-year trial period, before they are made into law.

While homeschool lobbyists pay a high price in terms of family time and worry, I feel for my part that I really understand, better than any textbook could have explained, the realities of the saying, "The price of freedom is

eternal vigilance." Still, I don't believe that politicians of any persuasion, nor any other organizations in Australia, are out to eliminate homeschooling. There is just a great deal of fear and misinformation that we must continually deal with.

What are the differences between homeschooling in Australia and in the U.S.? Well, perhaps one of the main differences is size. Homeschoolers are perhaps .1% of the school-age population here, and an estimate in the U.S. would be 1.5% of the school-age population. Our country is almost the size of the U.S. but the population of the U.S. is 17 times ours. All of this tends to mean that constituents have more access to politicians, and as in the U.S., a lot of lobbying goes on.

In Australia, as in the U.S., we have many families homeschooling primarily for religious reasons. Another thing that is definitely the same in the two countries is that not all homeschoolers agree about which state laws are best. I believe we have an excellent ongoing relationship with the Minister for Education here in New South Wales, for instance, but other states' homeschoolers do not share our enthusiasm for our level of regulation. An inspector comes into our homes once every two years for a relaxed and informal visit, viewing the program, paperwork, diary, or other records and interacting with the children, generally in a very relaxed manner. There is no testing requirement of any sort here in NSW, and of the 152 homeschoolers registered last year, not a single one has had their registration refused. I regard this as good, but others will argue with me on this. In Victoria and the Australian Capital Territories, homeschoolers don't have to register at all. Queensland, on the other hand, has the best weather but the most onerous homeschooling requirements. Homeschoolers must be teachers or be supervised by teachers; otherwise they can use a correspondence course or homeschool underground.

Australian television provides good coverage of all of the major issues in America. Having been involved in changing the Education Law in one Australian state, which necessitated much background reading of the court rulings in America, I often look with envy at the U.S. Constitution. Our Australian Constitution is short on guarantees of freedoms and rights, because until very recently we relied on "ultimate justice" rulings through Britain, when a final appeal to our own High Court failed. In America, thanks to your Constitutional rights, you have had court rulings defining homeschooling as a right and limiting the power of politicians to alter that right. No such "right-defining" court cases have ever been fought in Australia, but on the other hand no one has ever been put in jail for homeschooling either.

The differences between our countries are great in some ways and small in others, but in reading GWS I realize that in both places homeschoolers are becoming generally more aware, more political, more competent, and more acceptable to the community, and that homeschooling is growing in both our lands.

Questioning Ontario's Rules

Kelly Green (Ont.) writes:

Ontario's Education Act currently gives homeschooling families a considerable amount of freedom. The only passage in the Act that refers specifically to home-based education states simply that "A child is excused from attendance at school if (a) he is receiving satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere." Parents who wish to educate their children at home "can apply to their local board of education for approval of their program," or, if they choose not to work with the local board, they may run the risk of being charged with truancy by local or provincial school attendance counselors. This has occasionally proven to be a problem for people who live in a district with a school board that is hostile to homeschooling.

One way Ontarians have been able to work around hostile school boards has been the establishment of umbrella private schools specifically for home-based educators. In Ontario, an independent school can be set up with five students. Several families often get together and set up their own school in order to act as a support group for one another and to avoid harassment from the local board. Unfortunately, the Ontario Ministry of Education views these umbrella schools as a loophole in the Education Act and, we hear, is considering policy changes that would eliminate them. Efforts to get the Provincial Chief Attendance Counselor, Mr. Gary Diamond, to clarify the Ministry's official position on this issue have thus far not met with success, although on March 12, 1994, at a meeting with representatives from several homeschooling groups, Mr. Diamond did indicate that the Ministry of Education's current position on umbrella schools is that such schools are not, in fact, true legal institutions. Mr. Diamond said that he believes all homeschooling families should be reporting to their local school boards rather than to the Ministry through a private school. He has indicated that he believes homeschoolers who join private schools are merely trying to avoid their local school boards.

As a parent who has recently signed up with an independent umbrella school, I sent a letter and documents explaining our homeschooling to Mr. Diamond in May, to register my support of private schools for homeschooling families. As of mid-June, I had received no response. I called Mr. Diamond's office and spoke to him personally. He said that he had received my letter and that it was in his file of things to respond to. He thanked me for the documents I had sent and promised I would be hearing from him.

What Mr. Diamond did not tell me was that he had circulated my letter within the Ministry. This I gathered the day after our conversation. As it happens, the private school that our family has joined was targeted by the Ministry for a surprise spot inspection. The principal of the school had asked me to be on hand for this inspection, which was quite rigorous, in my opinion, considering that the school had not been contacted by the Ministry in its eleven previous years of existence. The two Ministry officials with whom we met indicated that there were those in the Ministry who

did not believe that our type of private school is a school at all and that many believed we were in collusion with those families who simply wanted to avoid their local school boards. "If we ever go to a site-based definition [of a school], you're finished," one of them remarked.

At this point I stated that in fact this was one of the motivations for families to join umbrella schools, and that we did not believe it was a crime not to wish to be accountable to a system with which we have grave philosophical differences. I brought out my letter to Mr. Diamond to show the Ministry representatives that I had stated this position in writing. One of the officials said, "I've seen your letter, and I think I can respond to a couple of points in it," which he proceeded to do. I was somewhat dumbfounded, as I had not indicated in my letter which private school I had chosen to enroll my son in, and at this point I realized that the letter had been circulated. It is now over one month since my talk with Mr. Diamond and his promise of a response to my inquiry. I have received no response.

Our school is now planning to incorporate, possibly as a parent cooperative corporation, under the Co-operatives Act of Ontario, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance. Such a parent cooperative will require a democratic organizational structure, with a minimum of five parent directors on a board. We believe that it may be more difficult for the Ministry to maintain that our school is "not an institution" if we take these steps.

Kelly later sent us the reply that she received from Mr. Diamond in early August, in which he said that it is the school board's responsibility to determine whether the home instruction the child is receiving is satisfactory. Mr. Diamond maintained that home schools are different from private schools and that a home-schooling network is not the same as a private school.

Kelly then wrote to Ontario's Minister of Education and Training, taking issue with Mr. Diamond's interpretation of the Education Act and saying, "If by networks of homeschoolers [Mr. Diamond] is referring to the private schools for home-based educators that have filed regular Notices of Intention to Operate over the past 15 or so years, then the Ministry has indeed changed its position. As I understand it, these schools were originally suggested as a viable alternative for home-based educators by Ministry of Education officials. To suddenly declare that they are no longer schools is a very important shift, which could affect hundreds of Ontario families." Kelly asked for further clarification from the Ministry and is waiting for a response.

Office News

[88:] Pat Farenga will speak to homeschoolers in Clarendon, Vermont on October 29th, and will sell books there too. For information, call Cindy Wade at 802-775-7807.

Late summer (when I'm writing this) is typically a time when there are many stories about homeschooling in the media and many requests for information from us. The August issue of *Good Housekeeping* magazine's short piece, "Teaching Children at Home," brought several hundred requests for our catalog and several hundred more orders for our Homeschooling List Packet. A piece by Micki Colfax in the June 20th issue of *First For Women* magazine listed us as a resource, and that also brought many information requests. The August 1st issue of the *Boston Globe* had an article that did a good job of showing what homeschooling can be like when parents follow their kids' interests. The article also has a sidebar that focuses on a teenager who discovered the homeschooling option herself. Finally, the 9/9/94 issue of the *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* is devoted entirely to homeschooling. If you want to see that issue, it's $7 (call 202-887-8621).

We'd like to hear about homeschoolers doing science in interesting ways. Have any of you sought out working scientists, either for answers to your questions or for volunteer opportunities? Are any of you getting together with other homeschoolers to do science experiments or to study some aspect of science? Is anybody visiting observatories or labs or nature centers or hospitals or something else I haven't mentioned here? Don't forget to send us good, clear photos with your writing whenever possible.

This issue of GWS is a short issue – 32 pages as opposed to 40, which is now our usual number – because our next issue, #102, will have our complete 1995 Directory in it, and we need to make that a 48-page issue to accommodate the Directory. In order to keep our printing costs constant over the course of the year, we needed to make the issue before the Directory issue shorter than usual. I'm glad we've managed to fit so much in, nevertheless, including several pieces that have been waiting for a while. Thanks to the writers for their patience!

Is there a place children can grow up naturally?

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Sudbury Valley's Press provides a rich literature documenting the development of children free to lead their lives, to learn, and to grow in a natural village-like setting. Among the titles are *Free at Last, Worlds in Creation, A New Look at Schools* and *The Sudbury Valley School Experience*.

For a complete list of offerings, write: Sudbury Valley School Press, 2 Winch Street, Framingham, MA 01701; or FAX: (508) 788-0674. Mention that you saw this notice for a 10% discount on your first order!

Or, to order *Kingdom of Childhood*, send $15 to the above address. We will waive the $2 postage and handling cost.

Families Making Music

Recording Tapes Together

Darlene Lester of California writes:

My husband, Steve, is a musician, and I love singing in ensembles. So (25 years ago) we started singing and harmonizing together. When we had children, they often heard Steve playing guitar or us singing together. I sang to the kids when they were little, and they sang with me as they got older. We didn't own a TV, but we often had recorded music playing in the background, ranging from folk to jazz to classical to rock to country. Steve often made up silly songs to sing with our little ones, encouraging them to supply words as they went along.

One Christmas we made a "show off" tape for our friends and family that featured the kids reciting poetry and playing the recorder, kazoos, drums, and shakers, while Steve sang silly songs and generally goofed off. We called the tape "The Incredible, Luminous, Universal, Musical Family." We sent a copy to our new friend and mentor John Holt, and he wrote back saying he loved it and wanted to carry it in his bookstore. This was in 1981, and it was the beginning of our home business, New Moon Records. We've added seven tapes to our list of offerings since then.

We found that Damian, our third child, could sing and harmonize at a very young age. Whenever we'd sing as a family, little "Damie-Doo" could be heard piping in very loudly and right on pitch. His exuberance was really amusing and precious to the older boys, and the only way we could keep him from being on a recording is if we did it secretly, late at night, after he'd gone to bed.

Damian was the backbone of our first educational tape, beginning when he was 9. His pitch and tone quality were excellent on our "Rounds" tape, with his little brother Gabe, age 7, taking his lead. By the time we recorded "Homestyle Harmony," they were harmonizing well together.

To prepare for recording these tapes, I searched through old song books looking for songs that moved me both musically and lyrically and that I thought the boys would enjoy also. I'd begin by learning and memorizing the part that I would sing; then I'd learn each of the boys' parts. Then we'd sit together at the piano going over each of their parts until they had them memorized. By the time we were done, they usually knew each other's parts too and could interchange parts easily. They were always anxious to try the parts together, so as soon as they felt confident, we'd try to harmonize. Sometimes we'd linger on an especially beautiful chord just to experience the thrill of it (or to tune it up!). After the songs were memorized, we'd record them. There was never any note-reading involved on the kids' parts. I've found kids to be excellent memorizers and that note-reading shifts the focus from careful listening to looking and not listening well.

Damian and Gabe during a recording session

The boys seemed to love to hear their voices blended with other parts, and we'd sing when we were driving somewhere in the car just to pass the time more pleasantly. Sometimes I'd suggest a song when the kids were beginning to bicker, just to restore harmony among them. It usually worked well.

During the making of "Homestyle Harmony," we welcomed a new family member, baby Benjamin. So we took a break from making educational tapes and began to focus on original songs about babies. We created the tapes "Only My Mama / Songs for Families with Nursing Babies" and "One More Person to Love." La Leche League picked up on them and began distributing them for us in 1987. These tapes were very popular, resulting in our doing concerts as a family at L.L.L. conferences.

As Damian moved into the teen years, his voice began changing and cracking. He found that he had about a three-note range. This discouraged him, and he became unwilling to sing on any other tapes. So his brother Gabe has carried the ball (quite capably) for the last couple of years. Gabe's voice is about to change, however, so we may be finished with recording for now. But wait! Baby Benjamin is now 8 years old, and I've noticed that he has a beautiful voice and good pitch. There may be another tape or two yet to emerge from the Lester family music studio.

There is something so special and precious about the energy and innocence of young life, and aside from the satisfaction of knowing that we are helping other families to learn to sing in harmony together, we feel so lucky to have these tapes that capture that energy and innocence in our family. The tapes will be treasured by our immediate and extended family for generations to come.

The boys all took up musical instruments, too, when they were younger, and during their teen years they became quite proficient players. They've had no formal lessons except brief stints in school bands when each

of them tried school. They all practice regularly on their own steam. We have never forced them.

There is hardly an hour in the day when there isn't someone playing an instrument or listening to music in our household. This is how we like it. It is one of the many ways that the Lesters experience "family" – how we're bound together.

Homeschoolers' Orchestra

From Nancy Schmoyer of Pennsylvania:

We have four children, ages 9 to14, and I'm expecting another one. We have a piano at home, and I had had a couple of years of piano and six months of organ lessons when I was growing up. Several years ago, I began playing piano at our church, and we started piano lessons with our oldest son. A man in the church graciously offered violin lessons to our second son, and then our oldest took up viola with this teacher, too. Because I was sitting through lessons and practices anyway, the teacher lent me a violin, and I began learning how to play it also. The children and I took group lessons together for three years. Then we got involved in a community orchestra at another church. This was a group made up of people from a variety of churches in the area.

I knew that several homeschoolers in the area wanted to get together for some kind of music ensemble. We're in touch with many homeschoolers in our county because my husband is the founder of the Bucks County Homeschoolers' Association. He started it about thirteen years ago, and as it has gotten bigger he has encouraged people to split off and form smaller, more local groups. Now there are about ten or twelve groups within the county, and my husband acts as the central clearinghouse for general information about homeschooling in the county.

I invited the homeschoolers who were interested in a music ensemble to come to the church one day and hear about the community orchestra. But that day, the man in charge of it announced that they were changing the goal of the group. It was now going to be much more professional, with auditions and so on. I knew that this was not what most of the other homeschoolers were looking for. They wanted some kind of group musical experience, but not something that professional. Before this, I had been asked about starting up such a group, but I was resistant to the idea. I felt I could handle it administratively, but I didn't feel qualified musically. But at this point, as the man spoke about making the community orchestra more professional, I decided it was time to start an orchestra with the homeschoolers, where all the kids would have an opportunity to play, regardless of their level.

The other homeschoolers and I got together in the parking lot right after this meeting, and I said, "Let's start our own group." This was in February of 1993, and that May we had our first concert. We had about 24 kids, and a beautiful variety of instruments. My one rule was that they had to read music fluently, but they didn't have to be highly skilled at playing. Then, for the little children who didn't read music or play an instrument, we created a resonator bell choir. I had bought these bells for our church, and I color coded them, so if the kids could hit the bell with the mallet, they could participate. That brought some of the younger kids in, which was nice.

I kept my expectations really low. I kept the music in the key of C or G, and I didn't overload the kids with a lot of practices. We had about a two-hour practice, once a month. What we didn't accomplish in that time, we scrapped from the program. We didn't try to fit more in than we could handle. It's surprising what high quality music you can get, even in the simplified versions. We tried to pick tunes that were familiar, if not to the children then to the parents.

I had some help from our violin teacher. He is an experienced musician who also has a great tolerance for children and for beginners, so he was able to help us with the technical aspects of the music. He would sit with the kids and help them with the timing and so on.

This past year, our second year, we

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chose music that was somewhat harder, but I gave it out much earlier. We started in September, instead of in February, for a May concert. My priority was for everyone to participate. We had four pianists and only one piano, so I had two of them play the Pachelbel Canon on the same piano, with one playing the upper octave and the other playing the lower octave, and then we brought in two keyboards for the other two to play, so all four pianists were playing at once.

Some of the parents who had instruments stuck away in the attic, and hadn't played since high school, joined in as well. This was a good way for them to play for a friendly audience, in an encouraging environment. It was an opportunity for them to have an activity with their child and to get back into their own music at the same time.

The youngest kids who participated were about 6, and the oldest were two 19-year-old boys. But not everyone played all the songs. I found that it was more difficult to cope with varying skill levels than with varying ages. I learned a lot – for example, during the first year, we had clarinets, which are B-flat instruments, so all the music had to be transposed. I did it manually, and that was a huge chore. So the second year I planned ahead and bought music that was already transposed, so I could just hand it out.

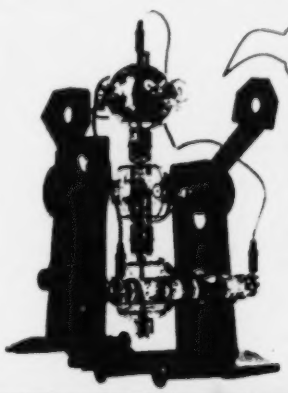
One advantage of having such an age range was that I encouraged the older kids, who were more advanced, to give lessons to the younger ones at lower rates than lessons usually go for around here. My 8-year-old daughter took flute lessons from an 18-year-old, and then she got to sit next to her teacher in the orchestra, so that was very nice. This teacher ended up with four students, all from our group.

As I said, it was sometimes hard to cope with the varying skill levels. We did have a few advanced students who left after the first year because their goals in music were more professional than ours. They went on to the Bucks County Youth Orchestra, which draws the best music students from the local schools. Although this wasn't an experience of being with other homeschoolers, it was an option offered by the community for these kids who were especially serious about music. I also know that another homeschooling group, out in Lancaster, has an orchestra which is much more highly structured than ours, with auditions, high skill, and a greater time commitment required.

In our group, we did sometimes run into the usual kinds of problems. For example, one of the keyboard players decided, the day before the concert, that she had a schedule conflict the following day, because of a baseball game. I just sat down with her and said, it's up to you, it's your choice, but I need to let you know that if you don't come to the concert tomorrow, that will disqualify you from being in the orchestra next year. I had to say that, because she was letting us down at the last minute. She chose the baseball game, so we did without her keyboard part, and my son played her part in the bell choir. I learned to expect these kinds of things – not everyone is mature and consistent, but don't let it throw the others who are doing a good job.

I know that the biggest obstacle to starting these kinds of groups is that the person who wants to do it doesn't always have the confidence to try. I had our violin teacher to fall back on for help, and that made a big difference. When people knew that I was expecting a baby and might not be able to continue the orchestra in the fall, some teachers in the area offered to take it over. I considered that, but I discovered that they didn't really have a homeschooling approach, and there would have been a cost involved, so I decided against it. Instead, I'm going to give the kids the music for this year, and they can practice on their own in the fall. Then after Christmas we'll get together and see what we can do between then and May or June.

My family also enjoys making music together. We've been able to play at weddings as a family, and we entered a fiddle competition on the fourth of July. My goal, both for our family music and for the orchestra, is that I want them to enjoy playing, still, when they're 35 – not to be afraid or intimidated, but just to enjoy playing whatever they can play.



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How John Taylor Gatto Got Students Out of the Classroom

John Taylor Gatto is the author of Dumbing Us Down *and is known for his "guerrilla curriculum," in which, among other things, students got out of the classroom and into the broader community. Some people – particularly other schoolteachers – wonder how Gatto was able to get kids out of school. In these excerpts from a series of tapes recorded at Gatto's "Empty Child Workshop" at the Omega Institute in New York State, he explains to other teachers how he was able to make these opportunities possible for school students.*

... I decided to use my classroom as a laboratory to heal the missing parts that my own schooling had left in me. How did I do that? Well, I started out by saying, "I can't build a house, or build a boat, or repair an automobile engine, or make a pair of pants, or grow a food crop," because the experience base that I would need do to those things was bundled up, thrown away, and replaced by an abstraction base. My time when I should have learned those things had been preempted into these cubicles and fragmented into subjects. ... I said, what I'm going to operate on is this idea that by ripping away an experience base, you usually leave behind somebody who is permanently crippled.

... The only kind of experience that no school administrator in the world has the courage to deny, if you go about it the right way, is community service. Going about it the right way means, first, recruiting the parents. I'd do it one by one. I'd do it with information lists, with house visits. Nothing helped me more than forming a personal relationship with the parents.

In schools, community service is often a fraud, just two hours and a pat on the head, and kids catch on to that quickly. There's no real responsibility. The hardest thing is to get [workplaces] that actually accept the kids and will give them real responsibility.

I saw, invariably, after 90 or 120 days [of community service], changes so radical take place in rich kids, middle class kids, and dirt poor kids, that it was as though I was talking to a peer and I could no longer maintain the teacher-student relationship. The payoff, when you work hard, is inherent in working hard. You don't need someone to tell you that you did a good job.

I had a Spanish boy, Devin. He was one of three brothers, and they were terrors! Nevertheless, I saw Devin holding the hands of a man receiving some sort of plasma drip in his arm at the hospital. The man was terrified – he was a man in his 70s – and this rotten kid wasn't a rotten kid anymore. He was a young man saying, "It's going to be all right." I could no longer look at Devin as a rotten kid, or as a kid at all, because I had a chance to see what we could give to each other.

I could no longer look at Devin as a rotten kid, or as a kid at all, because I had a chance to see what we could give to each other.

[To get the program started,] the first thing I did was to recruit a whole lot of glowing letters, and I supplied the parents with data about the value of community service, in dollars and cents terms. Bronx High School of Science [a selective school in New York City], at the meeting each year where they meet the parents before the freshman class comes in, tells the parents that the easiest way to get a college scholarship is by presenting a record of community service. That's quite true. It's also the easiest way to get into almost every special program in the United States. It's the easiest way for a young person to take a shoulder-to-shoulder role with adults and to be treated with respect.

So, first I got the parents' approval, and then I went to my fellow teachers, and I said "Look, the parents of this group of kids are involved in an experiment where one day a week their kid's going to be involved in community service. So you're only going to get these kids in your class four days a week." If you do that, not in a public teachers meeting, but if you do that privately, there are only a few teachers who will give you much trouble. There are a few, but then you say to them, "You can use this hospital volunteerism, for example, or running the pet shelter in New York City, or running the soup kitchen, you can build science learnings, math learnings, or language learnings on top of those things." If you're really sincere about wanting the kid to learn science, there are almost a limitless number of things you can do. If you're insincere about that, and what you really want to do is keep all your kids doing essentially the same thing, because otherwise it's an administrative nightmare for you, that's different.

Anyway, once the parents' permission is there, you then go out to set up the bases. So Columbia Presbyterian Hospital says it'll take eight volunteers, and they agree to your terms, they'll be distributing the kids throughout the hospital – because the great growth will come from the kid abandoning the idea that he's a kid, and taking on a human being's responsibility – and I will guarantee you'll gasp at how quickly the change takes place.

[After I got the program started,] it took the principal about three weeks to figure out that the kids were gone! They called me in, and said, "You can't do this." So I said, that's fine, it's a lot of work for me, I don't want to do it. *You* call 60 parents who are enthusiastic about this, you call the head of the volunteer department at Columbia, and all these other people who are enthusiastic about this. Well, none of them ever did pick the phone up and disconnect the program. After a while I would say, at the beginning of the year, "This is where the kids are going to be." It was just easier that way.

When I started out, I didn't do it

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with the whole class at once. I'd pick one student, and place her, and she'd be gone. Then I'd place another, and another, and another. After a month, kids would look around and say, "Where are these people?" I'd say, "They don't have to come to school today, and I can set up these opportunities for you, too." Usually the ones who were still in the classroom by this time were the shy ones, and I would set up a gentler sort of community service opportunity for them, maybe in a small daycare center, for example.

I'm showing you how, in the circumstances in which I found myself, I maneuvered around very rigid laws. You may well maneuver a different way. ...

The next way, after community service, is apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are politically very feasible. I found they were difficult, initially, to get, largely because the community has been trained, over the last century, not to see itself as part of the teaching process. I will assure you that in all other periods of history, everywhere on this planet, the whole community saw itself as a teaching resource. They saw that they would take things from kids and give things back to kids. Now, to convince people to do that, after the prejudicial portrayal of, especially, teenage boys, is tricky but not impossible. Your best resource is the yellow pages of the phone book. Anybody is a potential taker of an apprentice. I would call this program "One-day apprenticeships." I would ask people to take an apprentice for one day, who would serve as unpaid labor for that one day, and in exchange the adults would tell the kids how they think, how they make decisions.

The one-day apprenticeship would invariably be enlarged. The people would say, "One day isn't enough, you need three days." Of course, what you're really after is something year-long. But you get those much easier by asking for just a little. The payoff of being with a kid, and I hope you don't hear any romance in my voice, the payoff of being able to talk to a young person about your own life, is so great that people want more of it once they've had a taste of it. I just found this over and over again. If somebody wants to learn who you are and what you know, what's more exciting than that? To be made the center of someone else's attention, someone who has choices and they chose you? Now, I know that there's a mindset that's common: sure you can do that with the middle class kids, but with the urban poor, you can't. But it's just the reverse: it works almost instantly with the urban poor. They know they're getting something real. There are certain layers of conditioning in the middle class minds, although they know pretty quickly too...

If I could leave you with one thought, it's that these first two ideas almost can't fail. You almost can't butcher them, except by being too careful that the kids aren't exploited or safe, or by debriefing the kids endlessly, saying we're all going to talk about this. Don't do that! It's the kid's experience. Don't make him be a bleeding heart and talk about the experience in front of his friends, because he's going to resent you for that.

The third idea is mentorships. They are, I have to be honest, harder to get, because they really involve an adult in a kind of global relationship with a young person. But these aren't impossible to get either. Some kids don't want a mentorship anyway until they've had a lot of primary experience in these other ways. They wouldn't be able, emotionally, to handle intimacy with a stranger that way. But I would say that every year about a quarter of my kids had a mentorship. Often they develop out of an apprenticeship relationship. An apprenticeship should be strictly business, but a mentorship is much more like a family relationship.

... I didn't know anything at all about homeschooling. I probably knew the term and never even tried to put a picture to it. But I quickly saw that the parents were my best friends. I mean, all teachers say that, but I saw it practically. Gradually the parents taught me that there's no way to educate their children without taking the whole family into account – that the family is the central educator.

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Challenges & Concerns

How Much to Tell the District?

Cindy Gaddis of Pennsylvania wrote in response to Linda Wyatt's "Communicating With School District," GWS #98):

I respectfully disagree with your logic behind your need to explain the unschooling philosophy to your superintendent. Many homeschoolers have written in the past that we should give as little information to the school system as possible, for two reasons: one, because it's our right to homeschool and it's none of their business (we only give them the information we do because it's the law) and two, because if we submit more information, the idea may take root within the system to require more of homeschoolers in general.

At this time, the system only requires us to tell them *what* we are teaching and to prove at the end of the year that our child has the *product* of what we have taught. In other words, we basically have the freedom to teach how we want to; the school officials don't seem to worry about the process by which the children have learned.

We basically have the *how*. Wouldn't we all like to have the *what* and *when*! By submitting your homeschooling philosophy to the superintendent, by explaining how you are teaching your child, you are giving away the very thing we do have. Why would you do that willingly? You mention two reasons and I will respond to each.

The first is that you felt dishonest by not explaining how your homeschool truly works. But were you being dishonest? I don't think so. Because of the way the system watches over us, most of us have on hand, somewhere in our files, a basic public school curriculum for each grade level. I am going to assume that most of us refer to this curriculum periodically to see where we are falling in the system's view. Now, if you write down the educationese that they want to see and list what is typical of your child's grade level, you can probably also list the books you have on each topic. The system was not asking how you were going to teach these subjects that you wrote down, nor if your child would learn these things per se. Is everything a public school teacher is teaching actually being learned by all the children? We may be teaching our child by having the materials available to him because that is *how* we teach. But this is none of the system's business – they just need to know what, not how.

Your second reason was that you wanted to educate the superintendent about our way of teaching. A superintendent can be understanding about this philosophy, even to the point of adopting it in his own home. However, I will bet that the system still requires certain information about your home school from him.

What is most important to me is freedom. I long for the day that I can have complete freedom to teach my children without the system's approval. Right now we basically have *how, who, where, and why*. (I realize that some states and some areas can still have problems with some of these.) However, the system still desires to decide the *what* and *when* for us. I believe getting these further freedoms will be a long-term battle so I do not believe in trying to gain them by giving back what we do have.

This is all my opinion, of course, but I hope it helps you play the game without the guilt. And yes, it is a game, but better this smaller version of the game than the bigger one, the one in which our children learn the game rules of getting the grade, making the friends in the right groups, shutting up unless asked, etc. I wish I didn't have to give the schools anything! But I will only give them the minimum and the most insignificant information.

Ask Schools What *They* Can Offer

Herb Hough of New York writes:

I had some thoughts relating to Linda Wyatt's dilemma in "Communicating With School District," GWS #98. She could simply have said, "The forms you sent us have to do with teaching rather than learning. Please send the appropriate forms." If this sort of thing were done *en masse*, they would really have to do something about it.

Another tactic would be to send the principal a communication along the lines of the following:

"I am considering sending my child to your school. Please fill out the enclosed form so that I may better evaluate how your school might benefit my child."

The parents can then be as creative as they wish in including items on the form that are important to them. They might include such items as:

"How do you assist students in contacting various outside resources as needs arise?

"What is the size of your library/media center? What kinds of holdings does it have?

"Do you provide transportation to facilities outside of school, and do students need to make reservations ahead of time?

"If students decide to have a field trip, what is the minimum number (if any) for which you normally make arrangements for such a trip?

"Right now my child is interested in ____. How can you help him in these areas? What measures to you use to insure that students are allowed and encouraged to follow their interests?"

Does anyone have any further thoughts about this? Take a look at Linda Wyatt's letter in GWS #98 and let us know your response.

Learning to Accept Child's Temperament

Lael Whitehead (BC) writes:

I have three daughters: Lauren (8), Marlise (6), and Julia (3). We have been homeschooling for over a year now. Lauren endured three years of public school until I finally had the sense to pull her out. Marlise and Julia have never been to school.

It took me a long time to begin to understand why Lauren was such a difficult child (as I then thought). Apart from her dislike of school, she was often stubborn and angry at home, exploding with fury at me whenever I seemed to be pressuring her to do something. At the same time, she didn't want to visit at friends' houses, and tended to stick anxiously beside me whenever we found ourselves in a group of new people. I often found myself growing impatient with her. Why couldn't she be a normal, robust little kid like the others on our street, happy at school, friendly to other adults, interested in exploring new places and new activities? I sought to find extracurricular activities that would interest her, only to find that she invariably wanted to quit halfway through. I tried to help her make new friends in her class at school, but she preferred to stay home with her sisters or with her one best neighborhood friend.

It took a couple of years of watching Lauren grow increasingly anxious and miserable before I decided to take a good look at how I was treating her. I realized that I had to be on her side – not thinking of what she should be like but of who she actually was. That meant, first of all, taking her unhappiness at school seriously. I began to read like a maniac everything I could about education and homeschooling. Since I had no experience of homeschoolers, the whole idea was new and strange and exciting. I felt a profound sense of relief to discover that there was an alternative. After a little effort, I persuaded my husband, too, that we should pull Lauren out of school. We took the step on a trial basis. We would homeschool for a year and then review our options. But this past year has been so wonderful that I wouldn't dream of going back into the school system at this point.

Not only have I decided not to subject Lauren to school, but I have made a conscious effort to leave her alone, to trust her innate desire to share in and learn about her world. I haven't badgered her to take any outside classes and I haven't assigned her any academic work to do. At times this has been difficult, and Lauren's father was at first very skeptical of this "indulgent" approach to her education. But even he soon saw the dramatic change in Lauren. Now, after a year and a half of unschooling, she is a different kid. She is far calmer, more considerate of others, and less easily frustrated when things don't work out the way she had planned. She is constantly busy, reading for up to four hours a day at times, playing endlessly detailed imaginative games with her

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sister, writing stories and letters to pen-pals, and even, occasionally (and all on her own initiative) taking her math workbook out and rattling off a few pages of arithmetic. When we have adult friends over for supper, she often sits at the table long after the younger ones have left and listens with concentration and deep interest to the conversation around her. She even asked to join a baseball team this spring, much to my astonishment, and has become a dedicated player, quick to learn the rules of the game and eager to practice her skills. What a change from the little girl who used to feel that the world was a threat and a burden to her!

The thing about a personality like Lauren's is that her mind is always active, always generating ideas, questions, solutions, always creatively engaged with her world. When some adult comes along and says, "Now instead of wondering about x, I want you to think about y," her whole being rebels. She needs to start with her own experience, with what matters and makes sense to her at the time. If that means playing imaginative games for hours on end with dress-ups and stuffed animals, let her. She is practicing her creative and problem-solving skills through the medium of her play. And what she learns through her play will strengthen her resourcefulness in other areas.

Difficult Times with a Young One

Ruth Matilsky (NJ) writes:

After my second child, Jacob, was born, I really thought that I had this motherhood thing down pat. By the time he was 17 months old he was "civilized." He knew not to go into the road, and I could take him anywhere. So I figured it was all due to my superb parenting, and why not have another.

I often say that my third child, Laura, came to teach me humility. She started off by hating the car. I couldn't drive anywhere with her for about two years. Then as she grew I kept waiting for her to reach that "civilized" age when she would stop touching the things she should leave alone (like lamps and light sockets) and would stop dropping the dishes off the table. Eighteen months came and went. So did her second birthday. By her third birthday, our fourth child, Matthew, was born and she was still incredibly difficult to deal with. I couldn't take my eyes off her for a second and she would do things that would make me scream with frustration.

And then, when she turned 4, I noticed that she had this great attention span and could sit for hours with clay. Then when she was 4 1/2 she insisted on ballet classes, and I was amazed when she stuck with them and got selected to be the only one in her class of little ones to be in the annual recital. When I originally signed her up I did it on a week-to-week basis because I couldn't believe she would actually go through with it.

I remember that she wouldn't let me leave her at that age. She'd scream for an hour if I did. Now, at 7, she loves to have a babysitter and be away from home.

Now I watch as she teaches herself to read. She nags me for workbooks in math and looks for opportunities that will help her increase her reading and writing and spelling skills. She begged for piano lessons for a year and a half, and just before her seventh birthday we found a teacher. She loves it and plays every day.

I think about Laura whenever a potential homeschooling parent tells me they can't imagine being with their child all the time. I'll tell you, I can understand why the parent of a 3 year old might think that homeschooling could be purgatory. It's so hard to believe when your child is 3 that they really will grow up to be easier to live with. Matthew, too, has been so difficult that sometimes I call up some of my friends to remind me how difficult Laura was. That has kept me going.

The bottom line is that, after I struggled with Laura for those first several years, what an incredible waste it would have been to have turned her over to the school system. I don't think I ever would have known that sweetness if she'd been schooled.

When Labels Help Instead of Hurt

Patricia Munro of California writes:

Preface: I was buying a bumper sticker for our new car, and I was about to buy the one which read, "Question Authority," because that is what a good homeschooler does, when I saw, "Question Assumptions." Now it's easy to question authority, but questioning assumptions means we question ourselves and our beliefs. Without that questioning, we can sink into complacency and lose the life of our spirits.

Assumptions: Homeschooling can provide each child with an environment which meets his or her unique needs. Learning problems are a result of the needs of the classroom, which, by its nature, cannot provide individual environments. We should avoid labeling our children, because they will fit the label they are given.

Questioning: Miranda is one of those children politely referred to as challenging. Her charm and abilities are compensations for her apparent stubbornness. She is a child who cannot have a situation any way but her own. When she was little, she threw massive temper tantrums several times a day. Now she is 10 and they happen once a week, perhaps.

A typical example happened last night. Dave, her father, began reading *Ivanhoe* to Miranda, her sister Deborah, and a friend of Deborah's. The agreement, before the story began, was that he would read a chapter and then the younger girls could have a different story. At the end of the chapter, he closed *Ivanhoe*. He and the younger girls picked *Puss In Boots* and he began reading.

Miranda didn't want that story. She wouldn't listen, claiming it was a stupid story. Dave explained that he had read her story and she had agreed to let the other girls pick the next story. Miranda wouldn't acknowledge that. She bounced on the bed and yelled to keep them from reading. They left. She followed. She began hitting Deborah and her friend. Dave, who has a bad back and can't pick her up, pushed and pulled her into her

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room, where she sobbed despairingly, not really understanding that her actions had any part in the whole debacle.

Later that night, Miranda, Dave, and I sat down and discussed the episode. Despite better understanding, we still have no good ways for preventing the quick flip from reason to unreason that occurs within her. We love her and we are stuck.

When she was 5, she began kindergarten. Homeschooling was still hard for us to imagine. We had done a lot of reading, but weren't convinced that school was that awful. She went to first grade because kindergarten had been acceptable and she had made friends.

She hated first grade. I hated first grade. At her fall parent-teacher conference, we were told how our child was not fitting into the correct boxes. She was, we were told with some indignation, quietly stubborn and tuned out any activity she did not care for. I didn't blame her – the activities were, by and large, stupid. The same week, I met with my younger daughter's preschool teacher and heard a reflection of who Deborah was and how she was growing. That was the crystallizing moment when I knew that I would homeschool.

But we still did not pull Miranda out. It was the middle of the year. It was too big a change. And, with her temper and my own, I wasn't sure that we wouldn't kill each other.

Toward the end of the year, the class began a series of timed math facts – Math Monsters, they were called. Miranda had the humiliation of not passing her "ones" for three days. She simply could not work to speed. We told her she didn't have to do the test, but she thought that sitting it out would be too embarrassing. By sheer will, she conquered every fact – she was one of only three children to do so. The knowledge didn't stick. Now she has trouble recalling math facts. The whole experience was so horrendous and pointless, I am still angry thinking about it.

At the same time, my bright, interesting, and interested-in-life child said, "I don't like to learn," and I knew I could never send her back to public school. Yet I still couldn't homeschool. First grade had left both of us too battered. Despite trying to support her, I had been the school's emissary and her enemy too many times. So we found a Montessori school for second grade. There she had a loving teacher and few demands. She made friends. She worked exceedingly slowly.

In third grade, we were ready and she was ready and so she began to homeschool. That was also the year that her pediatrician diagnosed her as having ADD. That year I didn't really believe that ADD was more than a label that applied to schooled kids who were asked to do more than their immature systems could handle. I believed that she had a unique learning style which, at this time in her life, needed one-on-one attention. She would learn in her own way if left alone, I thought smugly. And so we proceeded.

But in the middle of this, her fourth grade year, suddenly her temper tantrums increased. Her ability to concentrate on anything written or rote decreased to about zero. And she became depressed.

As we were frantically worrying about our child, I read *Driven to Distraction* a book about ADD in children and adults. Much to my surprise, I recognized myself. I felt a profound sense of relief and understanding as I realized my own lack of organization and my trouble following through on long-term projects were not moral defects but likely results of my own tendency toward ADD. I looked at my parents and extended family and found my whole family tree laden with the same pattern.

At first I assumed that most people had the same issues. But, as I talked with friends, I realized that my struggles with organization and follow-through were not the norm. As I felt the relief from understanding myself, I realized that, by avoiding labels for Miranda and by only providing her with that special environment, we had failed to give her the tools she needed to understand her own body. We had, in effect, denied her glasses, saving instead, "Don't worry about seeing clearly, you just see differently." I wear glasses. When I don't wear them, I feel blind. If I didn't have them, I would be terribly handicapped. I would know I

was missing something, and feel that if I only tried harder – but harder wouldn't make my eyes focus. Only glasses make them focus.

So we labeled the problem. We discussed it with Miranda. We requested that our school district give her several tests, which resulted in interesting information. One test shows that she learns almost entirely by ear (at home, in fact, that is how she insists on learning). The tests also showed that she has a terrible time making use of visual information. This fit with what we had observed. So we faced a dilemma.

On the one hand, I believe that every child learns differently. Miranda's strengths are aural and tactile. On the other hand, inasmuch as she understands herself, she doesn't choose to develop *only* those skills. Her poor writing and her dependency on others frustrates her, as does her lack of concentration. On the one hand, we could give her more time, be more patient. She read late, but she reads well now. Perhaps the writing is simply a matter of time. On the other hand, she appears to be close to giving up on writing. So what do we do? What assumptions do we keep? Which do we give up?

As we begin to understand and work with this problem, we have also discovered that when we didn't label her, Miranda labeled herself. She labeled herself unloved and bad because she got into more trouble than her sister did. In the episode last night, she felt despairing of herself. Dave simply wanted her to respect the needs of others. She couldn't control her own behavior and Dave couldn't let her terrorize the younger children. But when he removed her from the situation, she felt unfairly attacked and unloved. Despite our attempts to give her positive attention, and despite her best efforts, when a problem arises, nine times out of ten Miranda will be in the middle. It's not because she's a bad kid, it's because she has more trouble controlling her impulses. But what she feels is that we love her less.

She labeled herself dumb because she couldn't work as fast as the other kids. It didn't matter that we read to her and took dictation from her. She was dependent on us to be there for her. She knew other kids weren't dependent on their parents in the same way. It didn't matter that she pursued spinning and sewing and dance. She still felt dumb.

Homeschooling is wonderful and I wish we had begun earlier. But I am not sure that in Miranda's case it is sufficient. So, next year, Miranda has chosen to get specific help from our school district in writing and in organization. She will work one-on-one with a learning specialist, and we will see. If it helps, well and good. If not, well, we can always leave. She will try, with trepidation, the infamous medication. And we will work to undo the damage done by not labeling her.

The assumptions I began with are common within the homeschooling community. I would like to see us question them. Sometimes a unique environment isn't enough, though it is a good start. Sometimes learning problems are real, not merely products of an overcrowded school system. And sometimes labels allow us to find our true selves by releasing us from the false names with which we label ourselves.

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The Trouble with Rewards

An interview with Alfie Kohn

Alfie Kohn's new book, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes*, isn't about homeschooling. At least, it doesn't seem to be at first glance. But it seems to us that the deep, underlying reasons for homeschooling are discussed on every page. In this interview, Kohn looks at what's wrong with artificial motivators and explores the idea of intrinsic motivation.

First, can you summarize the common idea of rewards, or of human motivation, that you're looking at in your book?

The way we raise our children in this society is similar to the way teachers teach and managers manage, and the major tactic can be summarized in six words: "Do this and you'll get that." This is a technique that works for our pets, so we assume it will work for people as well – namely, that if you dangle some goodie in front of people, you can get them to do what you want: to learn, perform, behave.

In *Punished by Rewards* I review about 400 studies and conclude that this approach backfires in almost all instances. Rewards and punishments are not opposites, as many caring parents assume. They are actually two sides of the same coin, and the coin doesn't buy very much. Rewards are just "control by seduction," as one researcher put it. They are a way of trying to manipulate children's behavior, and in the long run, we can only help kids to become lifelong learners and caring, decent people by working *with* them, not by doing things to them.

Why is the idea of offering rewards so attractive, then? Why do people persist in doing it?

First, because rewards are what we know. They're typically the way most of us were raised and taught. Second, because they get temporary compliance. If I offer you $500 to take off your shoes right now, you'll probably do so, and I could therefore conclude that rewards work. Third, the long-term detrimental effects of rewards – undermining interest and the quality of learning – are hard to tie to the rewards themselves. That is, the causal link gets fuzzy; we can't see what rewards are doing in the long run, and therefore have less reason to avoid them. Fourth, there is a subtle need on the part of many parents to maintain control over their children, to win a battle with them, which is the way many parent-child interactions seem to get played out. Rewards are a subtler way of keeping control and eliciting compliance, so they strike us as less overtly coercive than the use of punishments, but rewards don't challenge us, as parents or teachers, to move towards something more democratic and collaborative.

I was interested in your discussion, in the book, of who benefits from the use of rewards. You raise the idea that in school, for example, using rewards actually furthers the goals of the institution.

GWS readers may be sympathetic to an analysis that shows how rewards in classrooms perpetuate the nearly authoritarian structure of schools. However, it's somewhat more disconcerting to consider that this same kind of control structure can exist at home, and be perpetuated by rewards as well.

Taking each of those parts – first, what are the goals of the school system, that the use of rewards upholds? Why is it in the interest of schools to use rewards?

Rewards and punishments, and the whole carrot-and-stick psychology, can be useful for maintaining *any* kind of status quo. Teachers are especially apt to think that they need to maintain control of the classroom, because they regard the only alternative to authoritarian control as violent chaos. Articles, books, and seminars for teachers almost always assume that it's a good thing for the teacher to be in control of the classroom. The only question is how to get control and keep it. Since writing this book about rewards, I have come to think that maybe rewards and punishments as such are not the real problem. The underlying trouble is this perceived need to have control. So long as that need is there, rewards and punishments of one kind or another will always pop up as expedient instruments for getting control. I might add that there are a number of very thoughtful and compassionate teachers who fall into this trap. I can't help being reminded of dictators, throughout history, who have justified their own control on the grounds that bloody anarchy will ensue if they don't have things tightly in hand. People in an allegedly democratic society object to this, and say, "Hold on, there's a third alternative, which is called democracy." Oddly, we forget this third alternative when we look inside classrooms and families.

You mentioned that it can be more disconcerting for parents to realize that using rewards is a way of exerting control at home, too.

Yes, I can't help thinking of the parallels between parents and teachers. The problems with control, whether produced by crude, coercive actions or by gold stars and praise, are not unique to institutions. Parents, like teachers, may be less committed than they would like to believe they are to helping kids become autonomous, self-directed questioners who feel a sense of self-determination.

Indeed. And yet I think one of the reasons this issue may be so compelling to homeschoolers is that for at least some homeschooling parents, self-direction, self-motivation, and so on, are central to what homeschooling is all about, even as they

struggle with these concepts. And I'm guessing that some of the misunderstandings of, or disagreements with, your work would be the same as some of the misunderstandings of or disagreements with homeschooling. People who think that everything simply has to be based on a system of rewards and punishments have a hard time imagining the lives of some homeschoolers who really are as far outside of that realm as you can be in this culture.

Can you give us an idea of why rewards are so destructive?

Some 70 studies have demonstrated that the more we reward people for doing something, the more likely they are to lose interest in whatever they've been rewarded to do. One of my favorite studies used a [cultured milk] drink called kefir, which was unfamiliar to a group of toddlers. The first group just got some kefir to drink. The second group was praised lavishly for drinking. The third group was offered free movie tickets if they drank enough. The children in the latter two groups, who were rewarded, did indeed drink more kefir, just as a behaviorist would predict. But a week later, those kids were substantially less likely to be interested in drinking any more kefir, whereas the kids who got it without any promise of reward liked it a little bit more than they had before. If you substitute, for kefir, reading, doing math, acting responsibly, you begin to get a whiff of the enormous destructive power of rewards. They fundamentally undermine a commitment to or an interest in whatever the task is. Interestingly, in the kefir study in particular, the experimenter did not expect to find any negative effects of praise, and yet discovered that verbal doggie biscuits can be just as damaging as the tangible kind.

Twenty studies, meanwhile, have shown that the quality of performance, on tasks that require any degree of creativity or problem-solving, tends to diminish when people are rewarded for their performance or participation. This of course is contrary to what most of us would expect based on growing up in this culture. We're taught relentlessly that if you dangle a carrot in front of people, they'll work harder and do a better job. But one of the reasons that performance declines with rewards is that interest declines. Another reason is that kids and adults are less interested in taking risks, and exploring possibilities, when they have been led to focus on the sticker, the star, the ice cream, the A, or the dollar, that they will get at the end.

If the question is, "Do rewards motivate kids?", the answer is yes, absolutely. They motivate them to get rewards. Unfortunately, that's usually at the expense of interest in and excellence at what they're doing.

Rewards and punishments are not opposites, as many caring parents assume. They are actually two sides of the same coin, and the coin doesn't buy very much. We can only help kids to become lifelong learners and caring, decent people by working with them, not by doing things to them.

Another reason for this negative effect of rewards is that the relationship between reward-giver and reward-recipient is ruptured. The child comes to see the adult as a goodie-dispenser, as opposed to a caring ally, and is less likely to acknowledge the need for help if that could jeopardize the chance of receiving the reward.

Ultimately, this research comes down to an oversimplified view of motivation that many teachers and parents share. We have got to stop asking how motivated kids are, and start asking *how* kids are motivated. Motivation is not a single entity that kids have more or less of. There's a huge difference between intrinsic motivation, which means loving what you do for its own sake, and extrinsic motivation, which means seeing that task as a prerequisite for obtaining some inducement.

You said that it's difficult for people to see the causal link between rewards and their negative effects. I'm thinking about the things that adults believe to be true about themselves. On the one hand, people say, "I wouldn't work, or do some other activity, unless I were rewarded." On the other hand, people sometimes acknowledge that ever since being required to read in school, and being rewarded for it, they seldom if ever read for pleasure now. I'm wondering about the ways that people can see the effect of rewards on themselves, or feel it.

This is especially challenging to people whose first instinct is to say, rather defensively, "Well, I was rewarded (or punished), and I'm OK." It always requires some delicacy to suggest that we may not have escaped unscathed from a carrot-and-stick approach in our own childhoods. You point out, correctly I think, that many adults know how to read but don't read. Another possible long-term impact of rewards that we can see in our own lives is growing up to be praise-junkies. The more we were led to do something for an adult's approval, the more we hungered for that smile and nod and compliment, the less able we are to formulate standards of our own for how one should behave or what constitutes good work, and the less inclined we will be to be satisfied with those self-created goals.

Another connection with the homeschooling community that I see here is that homeschooling parents often go through a process of reevaluating their own schooling, which includes thinking about the effects of rewards. They'll say things like, "I got good grades but I realize that I wasn't really interested in the subject," and from those realizations will come a conviction that what they want to do is raise their children in a different way.

John Holt wrote about the idea of praise-junkies, too, and he made, as I think you do, the distinction between praise and acknowledgment. I know a lot of adults are confused about how to respond to something

a child does, if not *with praise.*

When a child comes to a parent with a drawing, what comes to most of us, most easily, to say, is, "What a wonderful drawing! You're such a good artist." This takes no thought, no care, no skill, yet it's what we think kids need. But the likely effect is that kids will become more and more interested in doing whatever they need to do to get that reaction again. That's if it works. Some parents and teachers have noticed that sometimes kids will become more obstinate after they've been praised. I think in that case the child is saying, in effect, "I want my autonomy back." The striking feature of a positive judgment is not that it's positive but that it's a judgment. Mommy, who is giving the thumbs-up now, may be giving me the thumbs-down tomorrow, so I want to dissociate myself from the whole enterprise. That's what might be going on, at a simpler level, in such a child's mind.

But most kids, especially younger children and especially girls in our culture, are more likely to light up with pleasure when they hear words of approval from Mom or Dad. Those are the kids I'm worried about, because those are the kids who have been helped not one whit to formulate standards by which their work can be judged, or to develop some sense of independent analysis and some kind of self-reliance.

If we want to emphasize encouragement or acknowledgment instead of praise, we can respond to the drawing with description and questions: "I notice you have the moon to the left of the tree here, instead of behind it. Why did you decide on that?" or "You use a lot of orange. Is that your favorite color?" or "What are you going to draw tomorrow?" Not a single evaluative comment has been offered in these examples, but the child very likely feels appreciated, noticed, valued. I focus on two central criteria by which we can judge our own comments to kids' work. The first is, "Is my reaction helping my child to feel more or less self-determining? Is the child coming to experience what might be called empowerment, feeling in a position of making decisions, or is the child coming to feel controlled?" The second criterion is, "Are my comments helping the child become interested in the task itself, or am I drawing the child out of the task and into my face, my reaction?" Young children have a powerful need for our approval, to be sure, and I think that places on our shoulders an enormous responsibility not to exploit that for our own convenience.

If the question is, "Do rewards motivate kids?", the answer is yes, absolutely. They motivate them to get rewards. Unfortunately, that's usually at the expense of interest in and excellence at what they're doing.

An interesting question that has come up for me, in discussions of how to respond to children's work, is that while on the one hand I completely see what you mean about praise, on the other hand I also place a high priority on being honest and genuine in my responses, rather than contrived or playing a role. So what happens if I actually love the drawing?

I'm frankly ambivalent about the expression of genuine excitement about what a child has done. On the one hand, I'd never want to recommend stifling excitement or being less than honest about one's own reaction. On the other hand, just because a reaction comes to us naturally doesn't mean that it's guaranteed to be risk-free. Some of what comes to us naturally is based on years of conditioning. I find it difficult to move beyond praise in my own life, because it's what I've been trained to do. Sometimes I feel as if purely descriptive comments and questions are stingy, or chilly, as if I'm withholding something that somebody else needs. On reflection, I think that's very rarely the case, and says more about what I need to say than about what somebody else needs to hear. But I would say that a genuine reaction of excitement about a child's product is usually going to be constructive, or at least not destructive. We certainly don't want to be contrived or affected in what we say. Yet, again, I do think we need to attend to the effects of what we say, even if our own motivations are pure. I might not be manipulative at all, and yet if the effect of the pattern of my response is to get kids hooked on my approval, I may need to reconsider it anyway.

In the book you talk about the effect of rewards on performance – the trouble with saying "How am I doing?" all the time.

If kids are led to think constantly about how well they're doing, even by relatively enlightened measures and methods, they may come to be less interested in *what* they're doing. At some point I think it's appropriate to help kids reflect on what they've done, to provide some feedback on how it might be done better. But I think we have to be very careful about getting kids to think *continuously* about how well they're doing. The more anxious they are for some positive assessment, the more likely they are to pick the easiest possible task so that they can get that positive assessment. That's the opposite of the experience of inquiry and discovery.

In GWS we've made the distinction between evaluation (like grades) and feedback (like helpful comments about how to improve one's work).

A related distinction is that between feedback that comes from the work itself and feedback that comes from an external judgment. I get feedback when I can't solve for x, or make sense of a character's motivation in a story. The first kind of feedback doesn't require someone coming to me and saying, "Good job" or "Bad

job." That kind of feedback is not always possible, but is the most constructive when it is possible, I think. And I think the most useful sort of assessment from other people takes place in two stages. Stage one consists of bringing kids into the process of deciding what the criteria are for excellence, what the standards are that the child, or whoever is doing the thing, feels some commitment to. What makes a math solution elegant, or an essay persuasive? Step two, later, consists of bringing kids in again, this time to weigh their own efforts against the criteria they helped to develop.

As a working writer, obviously you're not in the situation of getting graded. What kind of feedback do you find helpful? When you ask someone to comment on one of your manuscripts, what are you asking them to do?

First, I want the person to consult me about what I was trying to do, so that we can then discuss how successful I was at doing it. Second, I want feedback that's as specific as possible. Sweeping judgments about its being very good or very disappointing are not as useful. Third, I want to be asked, but also helped, about how a particular problem can be corrected, assuming I've come to agree that there is a problem.

I want to explore the whole idea of instrinsic motivation, which you brought up earlier, because I find this is something commonly misunderstood in discussions about homeschooling. One question seems to be about human nature itself. What are people like? Are we the kinds of creatures who do things mainly to get rewards or avoid punishments, or not?

Children, in particular, are so instrinsically motivated to make sense of their world, to play with letters, numbers, and ideas, that you can't stop them very easily. Eventually we do stop them, by getting them hooked on approval and grades, or getting them to fear some kind of punishment or disapproval. But the amazing self-fulfilling prophecy here is that after rewards and punishments have done their damage, and instrinsic motivation evaporates, we turn around and say, "You see! If we don't use carrots and sticks, they won't want to do anything."

This comes up for homeschoolers when the kids are coming out of school after having been in it for years. Often it's exactly as you say: the external motivators have done their damage, and now, what can be done to restore the internal motivation?

The last thing we want to do in that circumstance is give the kid *more* artificial inducements, on the theory that this is what that child responds to. I compare it to giving salt water to a thirsty child; this is not the solution, it's the problem. To dispense with extrinsic motivators, we have to bring the child in on a discussion about what the effects are of these grades, or pizza parties, or stickers. Often I find that even a child as young as 8 can see that a reading incentive program undermines his interest in reading. So the child should be part of the process of moving from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation.

Next, I think that attention has to be paid to the task itself. Frankly, if you are going to give me a set of multiplication problems – naked numbers, as I like to call them – or some workbook that you picked up at a rummage sale – well, few members of our species are going to be intrinsically motivated to engage in that task. The problem isn't just the history of rewards, it's that the child does not find the task engaging or meaningful. One powerful way to tap kids' intrinsic interest is to give them substantial discretion about what they're doing. This is one of the strengths of the Holt approach to homeschooling, that the child often leads by his or her interests and the parents facilitate discovery.

I notice that some people say they want kids to be self-motivated, but what they really mean is, "I want the child willingly and cheerfully to do what I want him to do."

Yes. That's true with respect to academics and with respect to moral and behavorial issues. "My kid isn't motivated" often means "My kid won't do what I tell her." That requires some often painful introspection on the part of adults. What are we really looking for? If we want kids who are lifelong learners, and moral agents, and decent people, you get that way, you learn how to make good decisions, by making decisions, not by following directions.

Punished by Rewards is available in hardcover from John Holt's Book & Music Store; item #3220, $22.95 + $4.50 s/h. See GWS #56 for more on the question of rewards, and GWS #92 for more on what constitutes helpful feedback.

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Moving On – College and Work Choices

Financial Aid Decisions

*Ayanna Williams wrote in the April/May 1994 issue of Umoja*Unidad*Unity:*

When I applied to Antioch and only Antioch, I thought that was where I wanted to spend the next four years of my life. I had eliminated the few other schools I had seriously considered because of their lack of students of color or their overall atmosphere. At some, religion was stressed. At others, everyone was career-focused.

To apply to Antioch I had to get recommendations from people outside of my family. I only needed two, but at the last minute I decided that the more the merrier. I got one from a man who has known my family all my life and is up to date on my life because he is a subscriber to the newsletter I put out with my homeschooling siblings. One woman who wrote a recommendation was a summer employer when I worked at the local Senior Citizens Meals Program to collect some oral history of the area. Another was a member of the writers' group I belong to and has been involved in tutoring at the school where I tutored last winter. I also got a recommendation from Grace Llewellyn, the editor of *Real Lives*, a book of essays by teens about their homeschooling experience. She worked with me on my contribution to the book.

I had to write some essays. Three, to be exact – two for admissions and one for financial aid. I wrote the ones for admissions about homeschooling and wrote the other one about my experience tutoring. For the scholarship, I wrote about my experience with the senior citizens. I had to rewrite each essay many times before I said all I needed to say, the way I wanted it said.

In March I was accepted for admission to Antioch. Since it was the only school I applied to, I immediately sent a letter back telling them to save me a place in their freshman class. A few weeks later I received my financial aid award. I had worried little about the cost of tuition. I believed I was poor and talented enough to qualify for many things.

I was very disappointed with my financial aid award: $2,450 (Pell grant), $1,700 (work-study), $3,000 (federal supplement grant), $8,723 (Antioch scholarship), $2,625 (Stafford loan – can only repay with money), $1,000 (Perkins loan – can repay with service).

They gave me $19,198 [total], but costs are $20,216. They told me I also needed $800 to $1500 for books and personal expenses, and expenses related to the co-op set-up (where you work in another town). I was not pleased, but I accepted. I accepted first and thought about it later. I started to realize how much money that really meant to me, how many years of debt I was committing myself to.

I began to look for something less expensive to do next year. I looked through all the materials piled around my room: the pamphlets of volunteer opportunities, the want ads. I finally came across an application for the University of New Mexico. Right on the front it had the tuition: $5,880 plus $3,279 for room and board. $9,159 total. The travel would add to the cost, but if I got the Amigo Scholarship I keep reading about, I would pay the in-state tuition of only $1,656! Either way, much better than Antioch.

Something to think about, and think about it I did. Then I wrote letters letting the University of New Mexico know that I had applied to Antioch but felt I would have such financial hardship that it would affect my academics. When I took the letter to the mailbox, I met the mailman just as he was about to put a letter from the University of New Mexico into the box. Inside was the card of the Assistant Director of Admissions and an application for the Amigo Scholarship. A sign, don't you think?

I applied to the University of New Mexico the next day and sent in the scholarship application. I also mailed a letter to Antioch's financial aid office letting them know I feel I overextended myself and asking if they might be able to do a little more by way of assistance and less with the loans. I don't know what will happen. I have never been to the state of New Mexico, much less to the university. I am not only interested in the university because of the cost, however. I understand that they have a very diverse student body. They also offer the co-op program where one gets credit for work experience. Co-op is the main reason I was interested in Antioch.

*In the July/August issue of Umoja*Unidad*Unity, Ayanna writes that she has been accepted to the University of New Mexico, but because the university never received her scholarship application, she has had to submit it again and has therefore decided to delay her entrance until January 1995.*

Watching Her Son Leave Home

Alison McKee (WI) writes:

An editorial on National Public Radio last week caught my attention. The writer began by saying that in 1982 she found herself in tears as her son boarded the school bus for first grade. Her worry was that he would grow up too fast and be gone before she knew it. Her husband reassured her that this wouldn't be the case. Now the woman said she felt that time *had* sped by too quickly. Her son was 18 and the next phase of his life dictated that he go off to college. Although this mother understood that her son must go, she seemed to be saying that, indeed, her son's years in school had robbed her of the chance to mother him as much as she would have liked.

Our son Christian is, at 16, just beginning to make preparatory moves out into the world. His movements between home and the surrounding

communities seem to reflect those of Kim Kopel, in your "Alternatives to College" story in GWS #99, and other homeschoolers who, like him, have been given the opportunity to direct their own learning. As I watch Christian move beyond our immediate home, I am surprised by the excitement I feel for him. Unlike the NPR editorialist, I don't feel that my parenting opportunities have been lost, nor that things are happening too quickly. It seems as though everything in Christian's life has followed a natural rhythm, and part of that rhythm now entails moving beyond our immediate protection and into a community of his choosing.

Both of our children have spent their lifetimes readying themselves for what will, we hope, be a quite natural exodus from the home that David and I have provided. This process began for Christian when he was quite young. Initially his ventures were activities we shared together – trips to the park, to friends' homes, and to the library. As Christian got old enough to select his own library books, we went to a special library, "Roger's library." Roger, a dear friend of ours, took Christian under his wing and showed him the inner workings of his job – how to use the computerized check-out system, where the new books were located. These little experiences were some of the first Christian had in gaining skills of independence.

Over the years David and I inadvertently encouraged Christian to move further and further into community life. As we provided him with opportunities to study what grabbed his fancy, he moved into a wide variety of experiences which caused him to venture further and further from our doorstep. At this point it seems that Christian's pursuit of his interests, rather than the artificial timeline that schools inflict on children, will cause him to move beyond our home.

Christian's first forays into community life were as a volunteer in local political campaigns. This yielded to studies in stage make-up, comic book collecting, cross-country skiing, and acting, to name a few. Through the natural course of time he discarded those things which didn't suit his fancy and clung to those which did: singing, German, French, radio work, fly-fishing, and fly-tying.

To be sure, it wasn't always easy for Christian to follow his interests. In GWS #100 you read about his aborted attempts to become involved at his first radio placement. Other necessary, and quite natural, life changes brought about other changes: new German and French tutors, new radio administrators, different choirs and choir directors, and new fishing mentors. With each change came growth and David and I were intimately involved with that growth.

In the past two years Christian has turned his interest in fly-tying into a home-operated business, tying for local shops and private customers and demonstrating fly-tying at fly fishing conventions. Next spring he plans on being an apprentice, for at least a month, to a trout fishing guide here in Wisconsin. In the future he hopes to work in Yellowstone and to find another apprenticeship there.

This past summer his love for German took him to Germany, where he worked as a community volunteer. This was done in conjunction with a five-week program offered by the Concordia Language Villages in Minnesota. To continue his German studies, Christian has enrolled in two classes at the university this fall. His goal is to work for seven weeks as a camp counselor and German instructor in the Concordia program next summer.

The process of watching Christian's life unfold hasn't always been easy. There were weeks and months when he seemed to be in limbo, lacking any sort of direction. There were periods when he seemed to want to do nothing more than quarrel with us. At other times he experienced the stress of having opted to participate in too many activities at once. As we passed through these painful times, my faith in Holtian principles almost went by the wayside. If it were not for Christian's (and his sister Georgina's) irrepressible vigor and David's encouraging words to have patience, I might have tossed in the towel prematurely. In restrospect, though, all of those rough times seemed to be part of the unique metamorphosis that Christian needed to pass through in order to land where he currently stands.

SAT-Optional Colleges

From the Spring 1994 issue of the FairTest Examiner:

A comprehensive new FairTest survey has found that nearly 200 four-year schools have "SAT/ACT Optional" policies that allow many applicants to be admitted without taking either the Scholastic Assessment Tests (SAT) or American College Testing Program (ACT) exams.

Data compiled from a mail and telephone survey to schools selected from information in widely available college guides found 189 institutions where test scores are not used in admissions decisions for bachelor's degree programs. The "SAT/ACT Optional" list ranges from very selective private colleges such as Bates, Bowdoin, Hampshire, and Union to large public higher education complexes such as the Oregon and California state systems.

The last time FairTest conducted such a nationwide analysis – in 1988-89 – only 112 schools that did not require test scores were identified. The rapid growth in test-score-optional colleges demonstrates that neither the SAT nor ACT is necessary to run an efficient admissions process. New entries to the list include Ohio State University at Columbus and Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania.

Every school that has dropped its test score mandate reported that it was pleased with the results. Not a single institution on the 1988-89 optional list had begun requiring either SAT or ACT scores.

Many admissions officers interviewed by FairTest said that "SAT/ACT Optional" policies produced more and better-prepared applicants as well as positive reactions from alumni, students, guidance counselors, and the public. Several colleges explained that their policies were changed after administrators recognized that requiring test scores shrinks the pool of otherwise-qualified minorities and women because of the exams' biases.

A copy of the list may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to SAT-Optional List at FairTest, 342 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139.

Focus

Grown-Up Homeschoolers with Kids of Their Own

Interview with Sean Boston

Sean Boston lives in California and is the son of John Boston, founder of Home-Centered Learning, an umbrella private school in which homeschoolers can enroll:

How long were you homeschooled?

From the fifth grade until college. I went to college when I was 17, while living at home, and then I completely moved out of my parents' house when I was 20. I'm now working full-time as a mechanic – a brake technician at a Chrysler Dealer Store. I've been married four years and have a 2 and a 3 year old.

What were the reasons for your homeschooling? What had your school experiences been like?

In second grade I had a very good teacher, whom I really enjoyed. My reading and math level wasn't terrible, but it was kind of lower than normal, so this teacher kept me back the following year in a kind of second and third grade combination class. I stayed in her class for third grade, while the others went on to a regular third grade class. Being in that combination class wasn't too bad, but at the end of the semester I got a new teacher, and she wasn't too keen on the idea of the combination class. It wasn't her idea – she just got thrown into it. So she treated me with very little respect, as someone who was stupid, and she tried to demean me into becoming a better student. By the last couple of weeks of that year, I went back with my third grade classmates.

At this point I didn't like school at all. I stumbled along through fourth grade, and by the time I got into fifth grade I was so fed up with school, and with everybody telling me I was hyperactive or had some other kind of problem, that I wanted to commit suicide. I actually told my parents that, because I was so stressed out.

My parents realized that they had to do something. My father is an ex-schoolteacher, so he started to take me out of school after lunch and tutor me for the rest of the day. It was OK, but it wasn't good enough because it felt like more of the same school stuff, just with my father. So at that point my parents decided to keep me out of school for a couple of months, saying I was sick or whatever.

Then the school put me in a special ed class. At first it sounded like a good plan to me, because I thought I needed a change, but it was terrible. At this point I was reading on about a second grade level, and the special ed was all more of the same to me. I had had it, so my parents said, let's take him out of school altogether.

At first my dad tried doing school at home with me, working with me in a structured way, but that didn't work. I was even more stressed out. I was in tears at the end of every day. So he decided that he would go out on a limb and let me learn things as if I was an adult, as if I was a human being working on the same level as everyone else, which was totally different from what everyone else had tried with me before.

He got me a checkbook – we found a bank here that would let me write a check as long as I had my parent's signature on it too. That gave me a chance to do math and some spelling, and that worked out well. During this time I was very interested in automotive stuff. My dad gave me an old military jeep to fool around with, and I would take it apart and put it together again. It got to the point where I was really good at it and got it running again, and I learned quite a lot through that. My parents tried to put me in some automotive classes at college, but the college would have nothing to do with it. Then we found the regional occupational training classes at the high school, and I got into that when I was about 14 or 15. I began learning after hours at the local high school, and I was placed in a local machine shop where I stayed for about a year. After that I took a couple of college courses, and when I was 17 I began taking a full college course load.

When you met your wife, did you discuss your homeschooling background?

Yes, it came up well before we got married. She had had a pretty good experience with school. She's very good at that type of thing, whereas I would struggle more with it.

Before I met my wife, Michelle, I felt that I probably would not find a homeschooler to marry, because there just aren't many homeschoolers my age. I was just hoping that the person I did meet would be open to homeschooling, not totally against it. When we were first going out, yes, it was important to me, how she felt about my being homeschooled. Sure, she makes fun of it sometimes, just because it's different, but she accepts it, and I think if she didn't accept it, our relationship would never have gotten very far. At first she asked me questions, like, "Weren't you lonely?" and "How did you ever learn anything?" Actually, the first thing she asked was, "How'd you get away with that?" But again, I think that if she couldn't accept the fact

that I was homeschooled, we probably wouldn't have been able to have a relationship, because I can't become somebody that I'm not. When I met people, I didn't always toot my horn about homeschooling or force it into somebody's face, but on the other hand, I didn't hide it. Usually, they'd have a chance to find out I was a normal person first, and then they'd learn that I didn't go to school.

Michelle disagrees with some aspects of homeschooling, but that's her opinion. I do believe in some ways that homeschooling is very important, but on the other hand, I do see that some people have to use the school as a babysitting service. I live in the inner city, so I see that. In any case, I think that as long as people can understand each other, and as long as you do have some common ground, it's OK to have some different opinions.

What are your plans for your children? Do you talk about whether they'll go to school?

The way we feel about that is, we're going to allow them to go to school. If at some point they aren't enjoying school, or they aren't learning in it, then we will pull them out. This is what we agreed upon after we discussed it. Michelle agreed that if the kids weren't enjoying themselves in school, homeschooling is a choice we can make. I will talk about my homeschooling experience with them. We're very open and honest with them, because from my experience, I know that I was interested in what really happened, what adults would tell me from their own experience, and what they would say about what they went through.

How do you think your experiences as a homeschooler will affect the way you deal with your kids?

I will definitely have a different outlook on the schooling system. Unfortunately, when I was a child, we learned that the teachers were gods and you didn't question them. That was the way that my peers were treated by school, and so a lot of them will repeat that with their children and accept what the teacher says. But I won't blame my children if they have problems in school. I'll question the teacher about the problems. That was the whole thing about my school experience – the teachers kept telling me that I was the problem. I needed to change. My parents did what they were taught, which was: respect what the school person says, and that's the end of it. For example, even though they knew I wasn't hyperactive at home, they had me tested for hyperactivity at a medical center because the school people said I was hyperactive.

I don't believe that you have to go to school to learn, which is what the school system wants you to believe. So I'll be able to recognize that my kids are learning every day, not just when they're in school.

What about being a parent in general? Do you think your homeschooling influences that at all?

Sometimes I see myself doing things that I don't want to do, but I try and learn from that. I try and learn from my mistakes. If I look at the way other people treat their children, and compare that to the way I treat mine, I do believe I treat mine differently. I try and listen to what they have to say. When they say something, I treat that as something important, not just like, "Oh yeah, aren't you cute." I try to remember the things I liked and disliked when I was a child.

I believe some of that attitude comes from homeschooling, because homeschooling caused me to look at myself and think about how I'm doing things. I listened to how adults handled things, too. When my parents said, "There's something wrong with school, let's try something different," as opposed to most people who would say, "Let's keep going at it, keep smashing our heads against the wall," I think that had a big influence on me.

And then, suppose your kids do end up homeschooling. How do you think your having been homeschooled will affect that?

My father did a lot of research into homeschooling, particularly the legal and logistical aspects. It took him two years to figure all that out, and it will take me two days. So if our kids do homeschool, that will be a lot easier. I'll be able to build on what my father has done. Also, my parents had to unlearn what school taught them, but I've already done that, a long time ago.

Homeschooling in my case was a last resort for my parents at first, and in our case, with our kids, it's a choice, which is pretty much a quantum leap.

Interview with Jacqueline Peterson

Jacqueline Peterson lives in Colorado and is the daughter of Laurie and Ken Huffman, who helped found the Utah Home Education Association years ago:

My parents started homeschooling me when I was 12. I homeschooled until I was 17. I considered college for a while, but I didn't have the money to go. One day we were driving down the street and I noticed a technical school. I went in and talked to them and decided to go there. But it was incredibly dull, and it was so easy for me. Then they went out of business, and I never finished my degree with them. I worked a few different jobs, and I married when I was 20. I went on to have three children and do a whole bunch of other things. The children are now 4, 2, and two months.

One of the things

I learned from homeschooling is that a book can teach you anything. As an adult, I've spent hours and hours in the library, and I've learned origami, lace making, I've been studying several languages, studying homeopathy, playing the piano and advancing there. I've developed a love for history, language, the arts, and I've been continuing self-educating, even though I'm not technically homeschooling anymore.

I bet a lot of parents wonder how you do all that with three young children.

I stay up late and I don't get enough sleep! With a baby, I rely on tapes – language tapes, novels on tape. When the baby gets older, I'll go right back to the books, as I did when my second one started growing up a little.

What was your husband's attitude toward homeschooling, when he first found out that that's what you had done?

He was really impressed. He had met my sister first, and he thought she was in her twenties when she was a teenager. He had never heard of homeschooling before, but he had a favorable impression of it because of how mature we both seemed. It didn't become an issue in our dating at all. I don't think he realized he'd married someone who had so many interests, though, and so many controversial ideas!

Do you think you will homeschool your own kids?

That's a very sensitive issue for us. I don't think my husband realized I wanted to do it. He just thought our kids would go to public school and have a typical, normal life. It never occurred to him that there were alternatives, and he resisted the idea at first. Recently we've had some conversations about it that have been much better. He's more concerned about high school and college, and I'm more concerned about how the children would survive grade school, because that's what I went through, going to school during those years. So I'm trying to focus on their needs right now, and to say that by the time they reach high school age, they'll be old enough to know about the options and to say what they want.

My husband has also brought up the question of their social life. Originally I said, "You met my sister, you met me, and you liked what you saw, right? So consider me a representative of what homeschooling is, and think again." He did, and he realized that he liked the result of homeschooling, so why would he reject the means?

I think my husband's attitude is gradually changing. He pays attention to educational issues in the news, and I keep drawing his attention to some of the absolutely ridiculous things going on in schools. One issue is that he still thinks of school as being the way it was when he went, and it's hard for him to see how grade school can sometimes be harmful, because it wasn't that way for him. I tell him that things changed even between the time he went to high school and the time I did (he's ten years older than me), and they've changed even more now.

How does your own homeschooling background enter into this? How do you think it will affect the way you homeschool your kids, if that's what you end up doing?

I wrote my own curriculum when I was a teenager, so I know what it is to understand the law, to write a curriculum that meets the law, and then to execute it. That's a task that people who have never homeschooled are terrified of, but I know what to do because I've done it. I believe you can set up a curriculum from whatever's available. I'm not afraid of that, of doing it myself rather than using what's on the market (when I see what's on the market, I'm generally disappointed).

I'm not afraid of the socialization issue, either. I can say, from experience, that being homeschooled does not destroy your life. My mom used to be afraid that I'd come back to her years later and say, "You ruined my life, you made it so that I couldn't function." Obviously that isn't the case at all. In fact, she gave me a gift of freedom that I can never repay.

Do you think you'll worry less about some things?

My mother worried a lot about the amount of structure to have in homeschooling. When we started, we sat down at desks and had lessons. That lasted a few days. She also tried a very loose approach. She's tried everything, and wondered which is right. In my own mind, I look back on it and say, it worked, the combination worked, so it doesn't matter so much which way you do it. It seems to me that when you talk to homeschoolers, you hear that they're changing their approach every year. That makes the point that homeschooling is so flexible that it can change, and the children aren't damaged by change. I have one homeschooling friend who can't settle on anything, and she gets so discouraged, but meanwhile her kids are bright and wonderful to be with.

I learned to read at age 3, and so did my husband, but my son, at 4, isn't interested in learning to read yet, and that's OK. I don't worry that he'll never read. Anyway, to me, there's nothing you're supposed to learn as a kid that you can't catch up on as an adult, if you need to. My parents were more likely to have that embarrassed feeling, that competition: can your kid do what mine can do? With my own children, there may be a little social pressure if they can't do certain things, but I'm not going to worry and panic about it.

My mom says that for a long time we expected her to tell us what to do. Then we reached a level of boredom, and we tried to find something to do. I became curious about the books in the bookshelves, and because in school I had tended to want to do more than I was allowed to do, I really took off at home and started studying a lot, sometimes twelve hours a day. Sometimes I wonder – self-motivation is not something you can teach a person. I wonder how I'm going to teach my children in such a way that they will become self-motivated. That's something I'm not sure about.

I don't take my homeschooling for granted, because I know the difference between homeschooling and school.

If my children homeschool from the beginning, they probably will take it for granted. I hope they don't end up resenting me, saying, if she had been normal, if she hadn't had this unusual background, we would have had a different kind of life.

I'm a pretty adventurous parent. We go out and do things – climb and hike and do things we've never done before. We weren't restricted in homeschooling, and now, having experienced that wonderful freedom, I'm more relaxed about the limits I set on my own children. I don't worry so much about what they're doing, and I know it's OK if they just play.

Homeschooling parents often need to unlearn, or get over, some of the things they learned in school. Do you think you'll have to do it, or have you done some of it already since you left school at 12?

When I was in school, they labeled me school-phobic and anti-social. During my last year there, my social life was so awkward it was painful. One of the hardest things for me now, with my own child, is to let him play with other kids. I'm so afraid he'll be hurt like I was during my grade school time. When I started homeschooling, I made friends, but with adults. Even now, I have friends who are a couple of generations older than me.

I do know that even if I were to isolate my children because of my past experience, they would at some point tell me to knock it off, and they'd find friends. As long as they feel they can tell me that kind of thing, I think it will be OK. I don't believe in being a dictator, as a parent. In a way, that's the lazy way. It's easier, and often it seems to work for the parents, but not necessarily for the kids.

Some younger homeschoolers have said that their parents have paved the way in certain areas, and that if they become homeschooling parents, some things will be easier for them.

My parents worked to establish the Utah Home Education Association, and they made it so that homeschoolers could take classes in the public school. I have all their legal papers, the record of all the efforts they made, so I can learn from that. They showed me that there's a peaceable way to work with the public schools, if you want to do that.

Have you gotten involved with any homeschoolers in your area? I'm thinking that it would surprise them to meet you as a parent and then learn that you had been a homeschooler yourself.

I haven't gotten involved with homeschoolers' groups, but sometimes, especially in my church, I meet people who have just started homeschooling. It's funny; often, they're not very confident at first. I go up to them and say, "I hear you've just started homeschooling," and they say "Yes," nervously, as though they think I'm going to criticize it. I tell them I'm a graduate of homeschooling, and they get so excited. They've never seen the end result of homeschooling before.

Once, our bishop made a comment about how he felt the homeschoolers weren't getting enough socialization. He didn't know the whole story, because some of these kids were just getting out of school, and going through that healing time, and they needed time to themselves. My husband said, "We're going to have to talk to him about that, because it would change his attitude a lot if he met a fully functioning adult who was homeschooled." I guess that shows that my husband's atittude is changing too!

Interview with Amy Moore

Amy Moore is the daughter of Kandy Light, whose letters to GWS appear in several of our early issues.

I was homeschooled my whole life, and I finished in 1991 (I got my diploma from Clonlara) and went to Southern College in Tennessee. A year later I got married and had a little baby, who's now 13 months. I'm going to college part time now, studying behavioral science. I'm going to be a family counselor. My husband is a full-time student and also works, but he watches the baby when he can, and we have a lot of friends around here who help us watch the baby.

Homeschooling was a last resort for my parents, and in our case, with our kids, it's a choice.

What sorts of things were you involved in when you were homeschooling?

I was in Pathfinders, and I was very involved in 4-H and did a lot of showing sheep. I volunteered at a nursing home and did a lot of traveling.

I think that my mother kind of blazed the trail with homeschooling. My parents went through a lot of stuff – they had problems with the superintendent, with the law, and in my younger years, when we were going through all that, I was real afraid, every time I went out, about people asking me why I wasn't in school. Then the older I got, the more confident I got and the more confident my parents got, and I felt I had a good reason not to be in school.

What was it like to explain your homeschooling background to your husband?

I think it was different for him, and my friends, too, to see somebody who was homeschooled and knew how to relate to people. I think people have the idea that homeschoolers are hermits. But I had lots of friends at college, I was real outgoing. People would say, "Where did you go to school?", and I'd say I was homeschooled. It was weird for them to try to grasp it. My husband was always real interested in it; he wasn't turned off at all by it, which was a good thing. I would say the only thing I have a problem with is that he always has a high school reunion to go back

(continued on page 28)

Watching Children Learn

Figuring Out Math

Sue Smith-Heavenrich (NY) writes:

Some time ago my children were doing "math before breakfast" – a sort of game where they ask each other questions while I get out the cereal and juice. Coulter (who's 7) asked, "What's 1 Toby plus 1 Toby?" Toby, 4 years old, answered, "Eight."

"No, no," responded Coulter. 'What's 1 Toby plus 1 Toby?"

"Eight!" answered Toby, with more volume and conviction.

Suddenly it dawned on me that he was right. In terms of age, Two Tobies is the same as 2 x 4, which is 8. So as I passed out the bowls, I asked if one Toby was equal to 4 years. "Yes," Toby replied. They then began to create equations using their friends' ages: "Does 1 J (9) - 1 K (7) + 1 I (6) = 1 T (4)?" and so on.

I wonder how often "wrong answers" are simply right answers to different interpretations of a question. If the purpose of math is to use symbols to phrase observations about the world, then we need to give our children time to grow up using the language of math, and exploring it. When they began to talk, we didn't demand that they pronounce each word correctly or use proper grammar. So, too, I think mathematical thinking needs to grow naturally.

I grew up hating math. I remember my father sitting down with me each evening after dinner to go over flash cards. I feared getting the wrong answer. And so, as my reading and verbal abilities grew, my math skills remained stuck, as I made tortuous progress through workbook after workbook. I never, ever would have asked my sister at the breakfast table, "What's 1 Sue plus 1 Sue?" I simply avoided all math, believing (as my mom said) that I was "mathlexic."

Perhaps this is why I do not "teach" math to my children. We work out problems, play games with numbers, and use math as a tool in our daily living. Today we were sorting potatoes for market and weighing them. This led to all sorts of interesting math problems. The weight of the bowl we were using to hold the potatoes was 1/4 lb. Often we'd get a bowl full of potatoes that weighed something like 3 3/4 lb. I haven't yet formally taught fractions, but Coulter figured out how much the potatoes weighed, and added different weights together for a total. His comments? "Gee, Mom, this is fun! When are you going to dig more?"

They Created Schedules

Christyn Perkons of California writes:

I read the section in GWS #100 on creating useful schedules with great interest. I read that section to Dylan (9) and talked about how I create daily lists for myself so I don't forget to do the things that are important to me. He thought it was a great idea and observed that if he did it, it might eliminate my constant reminders to him to play his drum exercises. So he now has a daily list that includes reading, written math (he does complex multiplication in his head but has a lot of difficulty doing it on paper), and drumming.

He has decided to use the reading time to read a series of early reader books that we own, and play games on the computer that require reading. He does not want to put writing on his schedule yet, and I think this is because he does not feel particularly comfortable using pencils and pens. He will do writing with the computer games and although this is a struggle, it is one he chooses because of his interest in the game.

His weekly list includes chess and soccer with interested friends, because he enjoys both games but needs to remember to make playing arrangements. At my suggestion, we've included his daily and weekly chores on the lists to eliminate my reminders and to make him more independent about when his household work is done.

So far this is working well. He remains excited about adding activities of importance to him and about completing the tasks he sets himself.

Kaitlin (7) has done some sort of art work every day since she was old enough to use the tools. This now includes daily writing of lists (pets, birthday wants, colors of pencils she owns, all her relatives, etc.) and letters on the computer. She has to ask how to spell each word but she seems well on the "writing to read" path.

She is intrigued with the scheduling idea and has decided to make her own schedule that will include piano playing and written math. Interestingly, she included neither reading nor writing on her schedule. I believe this is because she recognizes that these are activities she already makes time for each day. We've often joked that art work is like breathing to Kaitlin, and the writing just seems to have become a part of this life work.

The 20% Solution

More from Jo-Anne Beirne (Australia):

One of the reasons that I homeschooled my children was that I realized my own school education was so limited. I don't particularly blame the school for this – in large schools, one cannot hope to show the breadth and depth of learning to every child. But how could we set about trying to

achieve this in our household? How could I help my children to know whether they would like to be politicians, social workers, geologists, philosophers, linguists, managers, etc.? And will the fact that they can write a decent English essay and do algebra help them find their life's work, or is it the finding of your life's work that makes you decide to write a decent English essay and do algebra?

We are lucky to live about forty miles outside of the city of Sydney, which has a huge number of resources. We try to use these wonderful resources regularly, and we specifically target classes, lectures, exhibitions, etc. that are primarily aimed at adults. We have tried events for children over the years and have often found them condescending in information and attitude. So we do as we did just last week, which was to attend a lecture by an Australian expert on reptiles and then a concert at a museum where two local musicians played a 1742 harpsichord and some 17th- and 18-century flutes.

We often take our 4 year old, Mary Beth, to these events, just as her brothers and sister came when they were her age. We're not trying to enforce education in these activities but rather to encourage exposure to a broad range of experiences. I rarely, if ever, prepare the children academically for such an event, because I hope the lecturers, artists, or performers can transmit their own enthusiasm and energy. I don't feel I have the time or energy to be into every subject myself, but I do think that homeschooling is a wonderful excuse to find out about and do all the things that I never knew or did before.

Some of the things we have done are: sat through debates at Parliament, attended workshops and displays set up for university students, gone to talks by famous scientists, authors, and economists (who are delighted to have children who will listen), attended a range of shows including magic and mime at street festivals, gone to open days at observatories and private collections. Afterwards there may be discussions among the children: "That guy was so boring/embarrassing/wonderful" or "I didn't know lizards had live births." The children may follow up on something they found interesting, but unless they ask for my help it will be without me because there is never enough time to do all the things that we want to do and other things are also important.

Some of the events we attend are boring, but I have the theory that you'll never know if you've never tried it. For example, I imagine that Mary Beth gets only a few things out of any event she attends with us. While she is so young, we can't tell what exactly she gets or will remember. For now I can see that she may find out the names, sounds, actions, etc. of some things she would not otherwise have known about. "They have to call it a harpsichord," she told us, "because it sounds *nothing* like a piano even though it looks like one." She is certainly learning to sit still and listen and she is learning that adults do a whole range of activities. She was quite shocked that a man works his whole life with snakes.

This idea fulfills what I call my 20% solution. I look at it this way: if I presume that we are all going to get only 20% of the information presented on any occasion, then we are still better off than if we had never gone. So then I don't expect too much and I'm not disappointed if two children hate the Mozart outdoor concert and one loves it. Of course, sometimes we get a great deal more than 20% out of an event. Perhaps we won't be inspired to create an essay, summary, artwork, or even to change career options, but nevertheless some light is put on in a room in our brains that would never otherwise have been lit.

A couple of years ago the kids and I went to a talk about frogs by a famous self-taught frog expert, Mike Tyler. "Not frogs!" the kids all said. Mike told us how his career arose from being fascinated by frogs as a child. Since then Gregory (14) found a frog in our own yard that changes from brown to white and turns out to be named after Mike Tyler (littoria tyleri). We have followed Mike's research, if we've come across it, and learned about the possible environmental consequences of the loss of so many frogs worldwide. Last week Stephen (10) was interested when an article by Mike caught his eye. It suggested that a cure for the herpes virus may have been found in the skin of a frog. "What's herpes?" Stephen asked. Now, maybe none of the children will end up working with frogs, but they have learned more about the environment, natural cures, and doing things your own way.

An example of the 20% solution that makes me smile the most is this: Gregory hated the idea of attending a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the Botanical Gardens. "A Shakespeare about fairies – are you kidding?" was his initial reaction. But he'll tell you now that he really enjoyed it. "The story is simple but very funny," he said the next day. "You'd never believe it was written so long ago." So when I suggested we see the Kenneth Branagh film, *Much Ado About Nothing*, Gregory saw it, twice! He even told the kids at football that he enjoyed both the play and the film. A greater than 20% result this time, I think!

Whether it be learning that some amazing lizards look like snakes but have tiny feet halfway down their bodies, or deciding, as Gregory did at a history of fashion exhibition, that "Some ladies' fashion is ugly and a rip-off," we've come to conclusions we wouldn't have come to without applying the 20% solution.

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FOCUS, cont. from page 25

to, and I don't have that, so we don't get to meet my old friends the way we meet his. But that's not too big a problem.

Have you talked about whether you will homeschool your child?

We have discussed it, and I don't know for sure. I think about it sometimes when I see kids in the school system. But I think I probably will send him to school, because my husband is going to be a pastor, and our church strongly encourages people to support the church school. So I think that to avoid conflicts with the church, we will send our son to the church school. If we were somewhere where we didn't have the option of a church school, I would homeschool.

What do you think that will be like, to send your child to school? Will your homeschooling background affect how you see that?

I hope I'm not too negative about school. I hate when teachers give busywork – I feel this way in college too – so I hope I'm able to be supportive if that's what happens in my son's school. That's something I'm going to have to work with.

I'm a take-charge person, so if there were any problems at the school, I'd be rushing in there, seeing what was going on. I'm going to be a very involved parent at the school. I'm not very interested in grades, though, and I'm sure that comes from my homeschooling background. I hope to give my son that same attitude: I want him to do his best, but that's all I'll ask. I won't make him feel like he has to get an A.

Do you think your homeschooling affects the way you are as a parent?

It makes me more independent, I think. I kind of do my own thing and don't feel pressured by what other people say. I think that's something you acquire through homeschooling, the attitude of: "This is what I'm doing, and if you don't agree, OK."

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since issue #100. Our complete 1994 Directory of Families was published in GWS #96, and the complete 1995 Directory will be published in GWS #102, the next issue. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

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AZ — John & Cyndie KIMBALL (Sarah/84, Jennifer/86, Joshua/91) 3113 W Los Gatos Dr, Phoenix 85027 (change) ••• John & Suzi LORSON (Samantha/81, JD/86) 6915 E Quail Run Rd, Paradise Valley 82523 ••• Steve & Linda MARRIA (Darryl/85, Carolyn/90, Emily/94) 5116 Malachite, Tucson 85741

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Michael & Tammy BILLECI (Joseph/86) 1885 Ednamary Way Apt B, Mt View 94040 ••• Heather BRICKLIN (Jeanita/89, Christopher/92) 162 Wilson St, San Francisco 94112 **(H)** ••• Franzi & Werner HAAG (Kirstin & Tania/89) 4751 Blanco Dr, San Jose 95129 **(H)** ••• Scott & Joni HAMMOND (Jacob/83, Jesse/86, Kalea/89, Briana/91, Abigail/94) 5465 Dow's Prairie Rd, McKinleyville 95521 ••• Larry SIMON & Diane SCHOENFELD (Leslie/91) 1876 San Lorenzo Av, Berkeley 94707

CA, South (zips to 94000) — Dennis & Peggy FOLTZ (Dennis/76, Tina/78, Lisa/81) 13001 Beanford St, Arleta 91331 ••• Tracie GIB & John BURGE (David/90) A La Carte Int'l School, 25383 Markham Ln, Salinas 93908 ••• Karen & Jim GREELEY (Eamon/82, Lyman/87) 2193 Mil Sorpresas, Fallbrook 92028 ••• Debbie & Howard GREEN (Bailey/88, Hillary/89) 51 Monticello, Irvine 92720 ••• Kim McDONALD (Steven/85, Nicole/87) 4903 Nautilus #3, Oxnard 93035 **(H)** ••• Liane & Andrew PETERSON (Rachel & Ariane/85) 1640 Robin Cir, Arroyo Grande 93420 ••• Neil RHODES & Julie McKEEHAN (Nicholas/78, Alexander/80)1328 Clock Av, Redlands 92374 **(H)** ••• Michael & Lisa THOMAS (Nicole/86, Benjamin/90, Samantha/92) 4088 Greenwood St, Newbury Park 91320

CO — George & Diana GRING (John/80, Craig/82) 315 Timberline Dr, Durango 81301

CT — Kim & Richard GILLILAND (Richard/91,

Tori/93) 27 High St, Deep River 06417

FL — Jan & Dave HANCOCK (Ann 90, Steve/94) 1260 Alma St, Lakeland 33803 ••• Karen & Wes KINNEY (Keeley/79, Beau/82) 21293 Burkhart Dr, Port Charlotte 33952 **(H)** ••• Gina & Richard MILLER (Erin/87, Ryan/88) 1139 Colony Arms Ct, Lakeland 33813

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ID — Pam PRUITT & Fred YAPUNCICH (Kate/83, John/88) 175 Tautphaus Dr, Idaho Falls 83404 **(H)**

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IN — Anselma & Matthew ASHLEY (John/89, Hannah/93) 22839 Arbor Pointe Dr, S Bend 46628 ••• Barbara & Daniel O'BRYAN (Eoin/89) 3291 N Chianti Dr, LaPorte 46350

KY — Gene & Beth KLEPPINGER (Benjamin/86, Jonathan/88)100 Bridge Av, Berea 40403 ••• John & Meg McCLOREY (Christopher/83, Meriwether/86) Kentucky Independent Learners Network, PO Box 275, Somerset 42502

LA — John & Shannon LANDRY (Rachel/82, Justin/86, Sarah/91) 40798 Hayes Rd, Slidell 70461

ME — Janet CAMPBELL & Stephen RYAN (Joshua/90, Micah/92) RFD 1 Box 317A, Houlton 04730

MD — Michael & Zelda BELL (Adam/80, Jessica/83, Connor/89, Gabriel/92) 8515 60th Pl, Berwyn Hts 20740 ••• Cathy & Thomas HUDSON (Carl/84, Bradley/86) 6018 Old Lawyers Hill Rd, Elkridge 21227 (change) **(H)** ••• Sandi & Craig ROBERTS (Erin/76, Shawn/78, Brian/81, Kevin/85, Tara/83) 925 Huffmaster Rd, Knoxville 21758 **(H)** ••• John & Linda SALB (Philip/97, Nicolas/90, Zander/93) 19012 Jamieson Dr, Germantown 20874

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MI —Rosa & Harvey MUSKET (Joshua/85)1514 J Spartan Village, E Lansing 48823

MN — Mark & Martha WIGMORE (Spencer/88, Katelyn/90, Morgan/92) 18913 Boston St NW, Elk River 55330

MT — John & Madelyn LaFAVE (Helena/89, Peter/91, Andrew/93) 1108 W Galena, Butte 59701

NE — Marianne & Ken WHEATCROFT-PARDUE (Emma/86) 2045 Harwood, Lincoln 68502

NH — Elizabeth LONGFELLOW & Gary ANDERSON (Haley/80, Taury/81, Winter/83) 16 Gulf Rd, Deerfield 03037 (change)

NJ — Linda & Stephen KRAVITZ (Rachel/85) 1072 Woodruff St, Iselin 08830 ••• Judy RUDERMAN & Robert DUBNER (Miranda/88) 13 Westervelt Pl, Westwood 07675 ••• Rose SIAS (Gene/79, Christina/82, Shawn/87, Denise/89) The Tutor (S. Jersey Homeschoolers), 1239 Whitaker Av, Millville 08332

NM — Betsy & David LANG (Daniel/85, Julie/88) PO Box 1231, Grants 87020

NY — Maria & Adam ABESHOUSE (Emily/90, Sarah/93) 128 Manor Ln, Pelham 10803-2417 ••• Barbara & Brian EASTON (Kyle/84, Kiefer/91) 4 McIntosh Ln, Clifton Park 12065 ••• Chris & Debbie FIGLIOLA (Pilar/90, Jordan/93) 35 Oriole Way, Dix Hills 11746 ••• Marguerite MILLER & Steven HOTOVY (Mark/84, Leah/87, Paul/89, Joel/93) 33 Keith Ln, Dryden 13053 (change) ••• Jeanne & Eric SMITH (Daniel/88) 119 Murray St, Binghamton 13905 ••• Cliff & Deborah WINKLER (Derek/89, Robin/92) 99 Meadow Ct, Glenwood 14069 ••• Lisa & Yitzhak YAKOBI (Rafael/89, Maya/92) 90 Knights Bridge Rd, 1K, Great Neck 11021

OH — MARK & Deborah WILLIAMS (Matt/87, Liz/90, Hannah/93) 56 N Bertchen St, Port Clinton 43452

OR — Leslie OTTO & Bruce HILL (Jesse/88, Sage/90, Sequoyah/92, baby/94) 68183 Northrup Cr Rd, Clatskanie 97016 **(H)**

PA — Sandy, Steve, & Duncan CLARK (Jessie/83, Mary/85) 146 N Waterford Av, Marietta 17547 **(H)** ••• Lance & Eileen STEIN (Jeremy/84, Joshua/86, Amy/90) Circle of Children Alt. Learning Co-op, 3 Keesey Ct, Stewartstown 17363 **(H)**

RI — Mary PIERCE & Bob PERSSON (Jordan/89) 3683 Tower Hill Rd, Wakefield 02879

TN — Anne FATHERA (John/83, Nicki/86, Nathan/89) 3214 Harris St, Murfreesboro 37130 ••• Kim & Vance PAGE (Kindel/85, Kori/88) 10215 Arnold Ln, Mascot 37806

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VT — Janice & Mark ELLIOTT (Leigh/87, Samantha/89) HCR 61 Box 38, Wardsboro 05355

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Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1994 Directory (GWS #96) Yes ___ No ___
Or in the additions in a subsquent issue? Yes ___ No ___

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NS — Mary MacEACHERN & Ted DAWSON (Moses/88, Benjamin/90, Anna/93) RR 2, Scotsburn B0K 1R0 **(H)**

Ont — Andrew BLAKE, 17 Mohawk Av, Port Credit L5G 3R5 ••• Kelly GREEN & Bruce WRIGLEY (Brian/88, John/90) 37 Keeble Cr, Ajax L1T 3R7 **(H)**

Other Locations — Vella & Dennis GREGOIRE (Simone/79, Camille/81) Via Sant'Anna, 45, 20020 Arese (Milan) **Italy** ••• Timothy & Junko RUSSELL (Shin/80, Ryo/86) USA Meddac - Japan, Unit 45011, APO AP 96343 (**Japan**) **(H)** ••• Rod & Kim WARK (Samuel/84, Matthew/87, Miriam/92) 48 Langford Ln, Burley in Wharfedale, LS29 7EJ, **England** (change) **(H)** ••• Michael & Karen ZIMMERMAN (Katy/87, Darin/90) 66 MI BDE, CMR 456 Box 2213, APO AE 09157 (**Germany**) (change)

Groups to add to the Directory of Organizations:

AK — Anchorage Home Spun Educators, 7421 Tangle Ct, Anchorage 99504-3527

KY — Kentucky Independent Learners Network, PO Box 275, Somerset 42502

PA — Diversity - United in Homeschooling, 920 Wood St, Bristol 19007, 215-788-3837

TX — Metroplex Middle of the Road (Home) Educators, 1702 S Hwy 121, Suite 607-110, Lewisville 75067, 214-724-1026

New Phone Numbers (addresses of these groups are still the same):

FairTest - 617-864-4810

Nat'l Coalition of Alternative Community Schools - 505-474-4312

North Dakota Home School Assoc - 701-223-4080

Certified Teacher willing to help homeschoolers: Denise Stanley, 3 Alhort Dr, Apt 3, Woburn MA 01801, 617-932-9281

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Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. ••• CHRISTIE, Apple Bough, Dereham Rd, Colkirk, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 7NH, England. Aaron (11) Scouts, design, cars; Joshua (7) Lego, biking, Playmobil ••• Heather WITKES (13) 235 Collegiate Dr, Johnstown PA 15904, karate, soccer, reading ••• Emily STEWART (15) 6090 Mt Sharp Rd, Wimberly TX 78676, art, music, soccer ••• Alison SPRUCE (15) 55B Holiday Dr, Portsmouth NH 03801, piano, poetry, church ••• Lauren COTTS (15) PO Box 482, Greenland NH 03840, letter-writing, sneezing, music ••• Melissa WEINER (16) 1336 Ramsay Cir, Walnut Creek CA 94596, ecology, literature, music ••• Silas DUROCHER (9) 307 S Church St, Middletown MD 21769, Australia, poetry, sports ••• HARRIS, 43 Mt Vernon St, Somersworth NH 03878, Casey (13) cats, reading, writing; Chrissy (10) singing, pottery, animals; Elizabeth (7) horses, reading, biking ••• MILLER, 1139 Colony Arms Ct, Lakeland FL 33813: Erin (6) shells, coloring, Legos; Ryan (5) the color gold, biking ••• Michelle KNIFFIN (6) 179 Spruce Knob Rd, Middletown Spgs VT 05757, drawing, reading, dancing ••• Leah HOTOVY (7) 33 Keith Ln, Dryden NY 13053, dancing, dress-up, writing ••• Mya Davis (13) 118 Elm St, Stoughton MA 02072, moviemaking, books, acting

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Book Reviews

In the Absence of the Sacred, by Jerry Mander
#3128 $14 + $3.50 s/h ($5 to Canada)

In the introduction to *In the Absence of the Sacred*, Jerry Mander writes:

"Originally I planned to write two books. The first was to be a critique of technological society as we know it in the United States, a kind of sequel to *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. Instead of concentrating on TV, though, it would have focused on the new technological age: 'the information society,' computerization, robotization, space travel, artificial intelligence, genetics, satellite communications. This seemed timely, since these technologies are changing our world at an astoundingly accelerating rate. Thus far, most people view these changes as good. But are they?

" ... The second book was to be a kind of continuation and update of Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. That book impressed me tremendously when I read it twenty years ago. In one sense it was a masterful work, detailing in excruciating fashion U.S. double-dealing and brutality against the Indians. But in another sense Brown did the Indian cause a disservice by seeming to suggest that they were all wiped out, and that now there is nothing to be done. ...

"While planning to write these two books, however, it became apparent to me that their subjects were inseparable. They belonged together as one book. There is no way to understand the situation of the Indians, Eskimos, Aborigines, island peoples, or other native societies without understanding the outside societies that act on them. And there is no way to understand the outside societies without understanding their relationships to native peoples and to nature itself."

Combining these subjects, Mander has written one of the most provocative books I have read in a long time. This is the kind of book you talk back to as you read, the kind of book you race through voraciously and also put down after reading a single page because you want to think over the ideas or talk about them with someone else. The book is full of stories (about the food shops, the cars, the family doctor of Mander's childhood, about what happened when the Dene Indians were introduced to TV, about what happens behind the scenes at Disney World), history (how the governments of native peoples may have influenced the framing of U.S. Consititution, for example), and social criticism (what effect does technology have in its various forms? would we have voted for the widespread use of the telephone, the television, the computer, the car, if we had known ahead of time the full ramifications of each choice?).

Mander asks hard questions and gives disconcerting information. Even when I didn't relish hearing what he was telling me, even when I decided that in some respects I disagreed with him, I consistently found myself fascinated by his stories and grateful for his analysis. This is an unusual and important book. — Susannah Sheffer

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It is all of a piece, really – the sort of curriculum that lends itself to being poured or stuffed into students' heads, the fact that students themselves have little to say about the process, the discipline required to keep them silent and separate, the view of learning as a transmission of information, and the view of children (and ultimately all organisms) as inert objects that must be motivated to learn from the outside with the use of reinforcements and threats. At the risk of sounding melodramatic, I believe we will never know what real education is until we have shaken off this sterile, discredited model.

from Punished by Rewards, by Alfie Kohn.
See the interview with Alfie Kohn inside this issue of GWS!

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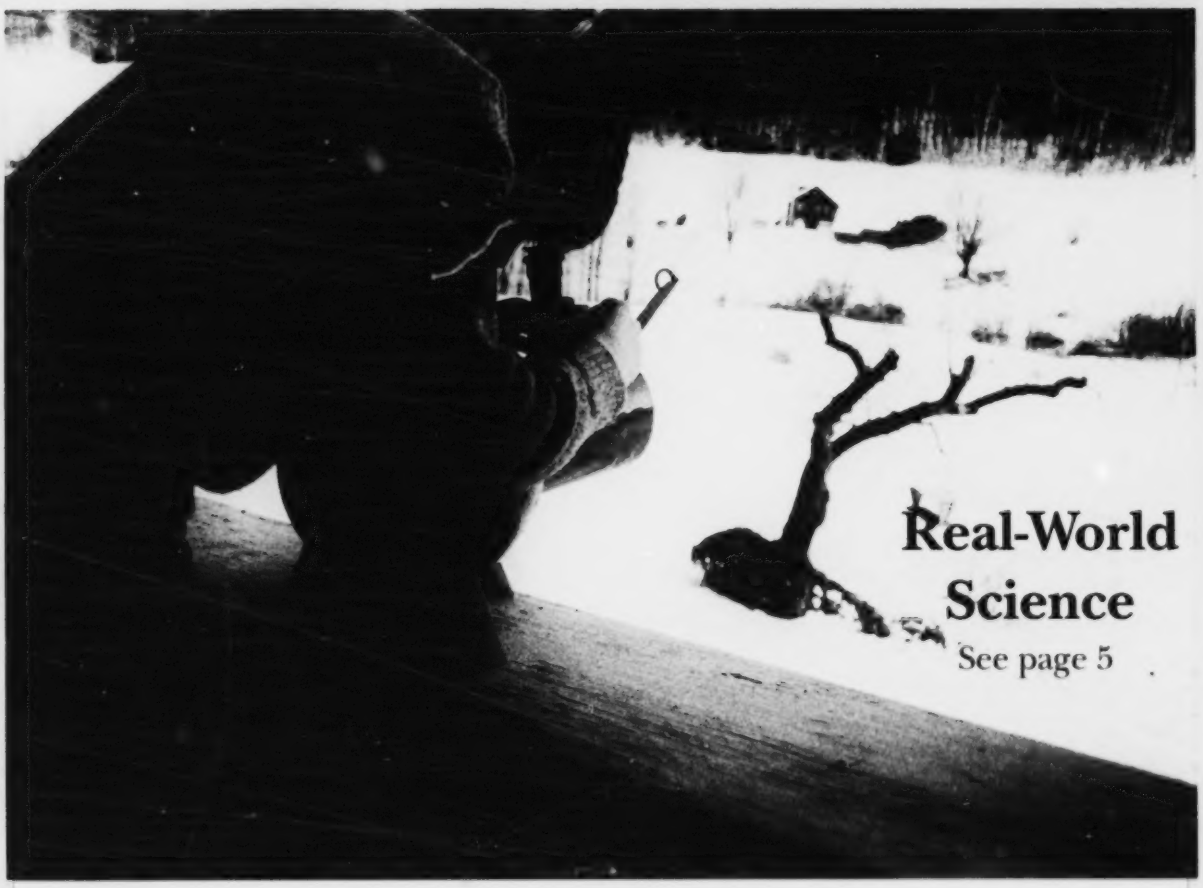

Real-World Science

See page 5

Homeschooling in Holland
Latino Homeschoolers
Focus: When Teachers Don't Realize They're Teaching
Self-Educating with Libraries
Making Connections

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Contents

News & Reports p. 3-4

Homeschooling Information Clearinghouse, Homeschooling in Holland

Real-World Science p. 5-7

Going on a Bolivian expedition, working at a marine science center, finding a helpful astronomy group and biology mentor

Latino Homeschoolers – Understanding the System, Reclaiming Control p. 8-9

Self-Educating – with the Library's Help p. 10-11

Challenges & Concerns p. 12-15

When Kids and Parents are Different, Labeling, Overcoming Doubts of First Year, Driver's Ed

Watching Children Learn p. 16-20

Writing, Ready for Math, Intensive WWII Study, Mothers' Reasons for Homeschooling

Making Connections p. 21

FOCUS: When Teachers Don't Realize They're Teaching p. 22-24

Teenage Homeschoolers – Just Starting Out, and Looking Back p. 26-27

Resources & Recommendations p. 28-29

1995 Directory of Families and Organizations p. 30-46

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GWS

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In this issue

Try this experiment: think of things you know, or understand, or know how to do. Think of how you learned those things. Most likely, other people had something to do with it, at least some of the time. Think of who helped you to learn these things – the people of whom it would be accurate to say, "I learned that from her" or "He taught me that." Now, ask yourself: how many of these people realize that you've learned from them? How many are aware that you attribute at least some of your knowledge or skill or understanding to their help?

My guess is that on all of our lists, there are several people from whom we've learned but who don't realize that they've been our teachers in some way. Maybe you learned something about basketball when you were younger by playing with some older kids. Or maybe you learned something about music from hearing another family member practice. Or maybe you learned how to talk respectfully to children by being around other parents who were able to do that. There are of course hundreds of possible examples.

We spend a lot of time in GWS trying to show, in one way or another, that people don't need to be explicitly taught in order to learn. Sometimes we do *want* to hook up with teachers who specifically intend to teach us. If you sign up for piano lessons, both you and the teacher know that you're trying to learn something from her. But even when we *aren't* taught in this explicit way, other people help us to learn, or we learn from other people. The kids who write for this issue's Focus give all sorts of examples of this as they describe what they've learned from people who didn't even realize they were teaching. So learning without formal lessons does not always mean learning "on one's own," as critics (and even advocates) often phrase it. It can just as easily mean learning from other people as we watch, listen to, help, work alongside of, and generally live in the world with them.

In a way, several of the other stories in this issue of GWS are about this topic, too. The stories about "Real-World Science" tell how important a community of working scientists can be to a young person's understanding of science. Some families worry that science is one subject that older homeschoolers won't have the resources to cover well, but in fact there are more people actually doing scientific work and study outside of a high school than in one, so the homeschooler actually has a much broader range of resources from which to draw.

Adrienne Storey's account of self-educating through library research might seem to be about a young person learning solely "on her own," but notice how important Adrienne found the librarian's respectful treatment of her, and how conscious she was of the fact that the books and documents she was discovering were written by people – people with whom she could disagree, people who could lead her to new ideas, people who could, in a certain way, become her teachers. — Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

Homeschooling Information Clearinghouse

Mary Griffith, who has been involved with the HomeSchool Association of California for years, has begun a group called the Homeschooling Information Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse's purpose is to help homeschoolers around the country publicize homeschooling. The newsletter, *Spotlight*, is full of advice, both from Mary and from homeschoolers all around the country, about getting the word out – dealing with the media, organizing local events, writing press releases, getting on local radio spots. The Clearinghouse also assembles media kits, and Mary writes that they "plan to create a basic information kit, to be updated annually, and supplemented quarterly with mailings of features on homeschooling and homeschoolers. Eventually we will develop a version tailored to public officials. We may offer both information kits, along with advice for customizing them for local use, for sale to local support groups."

In the first issue of the newsletter, Mary writes, "What's the way to defuse officials bent on discouraging homeschooling? What stops politicians dead in their tracks and sends them scurrying off in the opposite direction? What is our single most effective weapon to keep homeschooling legal across the country, and better yet, make it an unremarkable educational option?

"Public opinion.

"If the public at large understands and accepts homeschooling as an option, we will keep the legal right to homeschool. ... How do we create that positive, favorable picture of homeschooling? We make ourselves visible. We identify ourselves as homeschoolers. We show who we are, what we do, how we contribute to our communities.

"How do we create that positive, favorable picture of homeschooling? That's what the Homeschooling Information Clearinghouse is all about."

Homeschooling Information Clearinghouse, PO Box 293023, Sacramento CA 95829-3023; 916-422-2879.

Homeschooling in Holland

Liz Meyer Groenveld (The Netherlands) writes:

It *is* possible to homeschool here in Holland, but it is extremely difficult to find out how to go about it with official sanction. It took me nearly six years to get the information. I had even enlisted the aid of a somewhat sympathetic school board official who was unable to learn anything at all helpful. Most people make the mistake of asking permission to homeschool; all are told emphatically that no, homeschooling is not allowed, and that all children must attend school from the age of 6.

Ironically, once you know how to do it, homeschooling here is a relatively simple matter. A Dutch family won their homeschooling case in 1988 on the basis of constitutional freedom of thought and belief. They had a good lawyer who enjoyed the challenge of an idealistic case as a break from the more common drunk drivers and divorce cases. Like many American families before them, this family had to explain the reasons why they felt homeschooling was the best thing for their children and had to prove to the judge the strength of their convictions. As the father related the story to me, the judge's final question was, "What if I say 'no'?" The father replied that the family would leave Holland. The judge remarked, "Then you're really serious."

Mr. Krans, the lawyer who won this case, explained to me that when your child is 5, you must go to the local *burgemeester* (mayor) and school authorities and state that you will not be enrolling your child in school. I expect that if families do this, it will lead to challenges and threats. If this happens, families can contact me and I'll put them in touch with Mr. Krans, who will tell them how to proceed. It is important not to be bullied into enrolling your child in school, as this would compromise your legal position. In the eyes of the court, enrolling your child would indicate that your convictions are not strong enough.

I was not able to discover this information before my child was already 6, so I never reported to the school authorities when she was 5. Mr. Krans asked me if, should a court battle ever ensue, it would be possible to have our child "officially" out of the country for a year. This shouldn't present a problem, as it is impossible for the authorities to keep track of one's comings and goings here.

In fact, the only other method I have discovered to get away with homeschooling in Holland involved (1) avoiding the school board, and (2) when eventually challenged, stating that I am a U.S. citizen and am out of the country with my child more than half the year, and therefore subject to U.S. rather than Dutch law.

We came to the attention of the truant officer when the local Waldorf school reported us. My husband and I helped start the school and worked hard for them for over a year before becoming disillusioned with Waldorf education. The school felt insulted when we didn't enroll our daughter, and apprently they decided to force the issue. Lizzy was growing very curious about school, where she knew all the other children were going, and we feared that if we did not allow her to satisfy her curiosity, school would become an irresistable attraction. So we enrolled her in a cozy little public school. She attended enthusiastically for eight weeks before suddenly getting bored. Withdrawing her from school brought the truant officer around again immediately.

I was impressed with the fact that his questions concerned my child's welfare (academic and social development), rather than rules and regulations. I was able to reassure him on both counts, knowing that the school

(with an unusually enlightened director) would back up my story. It was three months before the truant officer returned, this time taking a threatening stance ("You know why I am here, Madam..."). I used the same story about traveling for more than six months of the year, and reassured him as to my care and concern for my child's education. I sounded as confident as I could, did my best to impress him as someone who knows her rights. I did expect him back within half a year, and in fact I learned the details of the Dutch court case only weeks later. However, 19 months have passed without another truancy visit.

It is possible that we could have problems in court over the fact that Lizzy was once enrolled in school here, should the authorities ever put two and two together. But as long as no one is bothering us, I can't worry about it; we could always go back to the "traveling" story (though I should add that it is stressful for parents and children to maintain a fiction while learning to be honest citizens!).

My worries have always been about the higher grades. Academic standards are very high here; for example, to enter university, one must know not only Dutch but English, German, and French. And in Holland one must have a trade diploma even for work such as flower arranging. Unemployment is very high, and such requirements become ever more stringent. But reading GWS never fails to reassure me that where there's a will, there's a way. I think that as long as we can meet the academic requirements, Lizzy should have no more trouble passing a state exam to enter university here than any transfer student from another country would have. Now that she is 7 and quite fluent in English and Dutch, I am working on finding someone to teach her German, which I think she will learn easily. I plan to ensure that Lizzy can homeschool as long as she wants to.

The last person who phoned me for information also worried that school children might taunt her for being different. Apparently the caller knew of someone who'd had this problem. We have never encountered anything like that, however, and don't expect to. Two years ago, if I mentioned that Lizzy was homeschooled, people raised eyebrows; lately it doesn't seem to provoke any reaction whatsoever, beyond occasional expressions of concern that she might be lonely without other children. Lizzy is an only child and we live in a neighborhood with no other children, so I have always gone out of my way to make sure she has plenty of children to play with. She made friends in school and has had no trouble keeping them. And lest you worry that she wouldn't have found friends outside of school, she also has a half dozen or so who are foreigners, and has made a few friends in her ballet class as well.

I do think people assume that we are doing things very officially, with tutors and textbooks, when in fact we are unschooling. I also ask the school children regularly what they're working on, and in most areas we're way ahead of Lizzy's class despite the minuscule amount of time we set aside for actual lessons.

Office News

We have two projects for which we'd like to enlist readers' help. The first is our back issue project. We want to have every word of our back issues on computer disks so that we can create a bound version of the complete set of issues and so that we can search and collate stories on common themes. We have only the most recent few issues on disk, so we are looking for volunteers to enter a complete issue onto a floppy disk that can be read by a Macintosh. Check in with us before beginning – we'll assign you an issue, and supply a copy if you don't already have one. (In case you're wondering, we *have* looked into scanning our issues into the computer, but have discovered that scanning is still pretty error-prone, especially with our earlier, small-type issues.) For each issue you enter, we'll give you a year's subscription or extend your current subscription by a year.

Our second project is this: we want to offer 50 trial, one-year subscriptions to selected libraries. Frankly, we are curious to see how many libraries will renew on their own after we offer the first year free. The criterion for selecting libraries is simple: find out if your librarian is interested in this offer and, if so, send us the contact name and address for the library. We'll send them a one-year subscription.

Further library news: Macmillan has published Jerry Mintz's The Handbook of Alternative Education. It contains essays about alternative schooling and one written by Pat Farenga about homeschooling. Its state-by-state directory contains nearly 7500 entries of alternative schools, programs, and homeschooling groups. The book costs $75 and is currently only available for sale to libraries, in hardbound editions. Suggest this to your library if you think they'd be interested. Jerry tells us that a paperback version, revised to further emphasize homeschooling, is due next year.

We always appreciate it when readers send us articles about homeschooling; you're our clipping service! Some recent articles in the national media: "The Dawn of Online Home Schooling," *Newsweek*, October 10, 1994, "Teaching Simone: Unexpected Lessons from a Homeschooling Year," *Washington Post Magazine*, September 25, 1994, "The Family Room is the Classroom," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 11, 1994.

This issue of GWS contains our complete 1995 Directory. Entries or changes that we received after our deadline will be printed in GWS #103, and our lists of teachers, lawyers, etc. will be printed there as well.

Calendar

April 1, 1995: Georgians for Freedom in Education Family Conference at Mt. Paran Church of God Central in Atlanta, Georgia. Keynote speaker and workshop leader, Pat Farenga. Other workshops, activities for children and teens. For info: Sandy Tucker 404-463-0781.

We are happy to print announcements of major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #103 (events in March or later) is January 10th. Deadline for GWS #104 (events in May or later) is March 10.

Real-World Science

Going on Expedition in Bolivia

From Kirsten Shepler (Venezuela):

"Science is one of the best reasons to quit school," Grace Llewellyn wrote in *The Teenage Liberation Handbook.* This was very true for me. The first day of my physical science class, our teacher started the class by telling us how well she had done in science. After she had received A's all through high school and college, she decided to get a job as a chemist. When she went in the first day of work, her superior had to explain to her, using jelly beans, exactly what she was doing. My teacher found out she didn't know a thing about science, that all those A's didn't mean a thing. After telling us this story, she informed us that none of us would be receiving A's. She then proceeded to abandon us to "jelly bean science" — that is, those artificially-colored fragments of science that can be packaged in a school laboratory. I presume that my science teacher expected us to construct our own scientific meaning from these jelly beans. After six months, I decided there was no meaning to be constructed from experiences which could be prepackaged in a school lab. In frustration, I left school and went looking for a real life and education.

Science intimidated me. I tried to take a biology course from a university independent study program. When the textbook came, I opened it and was blasted by jelly bean science. I closed the book quickly and never opened it again. I knew I was skimping on science, but it frightened me and I didn't want to have anything to do with it until I discovered real-life science through Earthwatch.

Earthwatch is a nonprofit organization that places lay volunteers with scientific expeditions throughout the world. After poring through their magazine, I found a project called Maternal Strategies in Bolivia. The expedition briefing described the project: "Slow to adopt modern family planning methods, Bolivian women have had their own time-tested ways of spacing children. The average Bolivian woman breastfed her child for 16 months, experienced amenorrhea (an interrupted menstrual cycle) for 11 months, and practiced sexual abstinence for 6 months after the child was born. As native Bolivian culture breaks down, however, with the flight to cities and the availability of artificial milk and modern medicines, such traditional birth control methods are beginning to disappear. Half a year after their child is born, 20 percent of Bolivian women no longer breastfeed and 25 percent have resumed menstruating. Deborah Bender and Robert Baker are studying how infant feeding, post-partum abstinence, amenorrhea, and contraceptive use are interrelated here. Can rural Bolivians learn to better combine traditional and modern medical and family planning practices?"

This project was perfect for me. For the first two weeks of August I would be working together with scientists and other volunteers on studying how "jelly bean science" had affected the Bolivian women's time-tested ways of spacing their children — that is, how with the availability of artificial milk and modern medicine the Bolivian women were out of harmony with their traditional birth control methods. At last I found real-life science.

One of the first things I learned about real-life science is that it involves action. Our main research area would be in Villa Primero de Mayo, a barrio outside the main city of Santa Cruz where recent immigrants from rural Quechua and Aymara regions live alongside residents born and raised in Santa Cruz. Working with Bolivian interviewers, we would be administering a 24-page questionnaire and conducting interviews with mothers with babies aged newborn to 18 months.

Our first interview was with a 20-year-old mother with a one-month-old baby. She and the grandmother continued to wash the clothes in the front yard while we conducted the interview. I was surprised how open this young woman was, telling complete strangers everything from when she was born to what kind of birth control she used. Thus, I conducted my first scientific investigation in the real-life laboratory of trust shared over a laundry tub.

This trust led to my second discovery about real-life science: that is, the relation of the known and the known does not conform to the stiff protocol of objectivism. I can't count how many times I would sit with young girls who knew their age but couldn't remember the year they were born. I would help them figure it out: "Well, since I am 17 and was born in 1977, you must have been born in 1978 or 1979." Then they would nod their heads enthusiastically and say, "Yes, that's it!" Throughout the rest of the interview, these young mothers would look to me for that small smile or encouraging nod of the head. There was a connection between us. These girls weren't objects that we could nick and prod and then discard. They were subjects who had feelings and a need to be heard and respected. When we know something truly and well, that which we know does not feel like a separate object to be manipulated and mastered. To search for scientific truth is to reach out with our whole persons for relationships which can reweave the community of the entire creation and to take our proper place in it.

The answer to the question, "What are the tools by which we know the world outside ourselves?" is quite inescapably this: "The whole person." Using the questionnaires to create meaning wasn't enough. Words which filled in the blanks couldn't reveal the woman who would answer each question and then anxiously look towards her husband for his approval, nor the girl who would ask her mother what *she* thought before answering that question herself, usually repeating what the mother had said. In real-life

science there is more to look at than just the facts. There are attitudes, body language, the hidden messages and ideas, the anxious looks, etc. In jelly bean science, we probe and prod, looking for the facts, sometimes passing right over those important factors that tell us the whole story.

This was the case with Laida, the new Bolivian interviewer whom I began to work with at the beginning of the second week. Laida had worked with the other interviewers on the city census and was used to getting just the facts and then moving on. During interviews she would listen only for the right answers. She would ask a question and as soon as the mother gave her the information she needed for the questionnaire, she would cut her off and ask the next question, ignoring the mother's story. The rest of the week, I worked on slowing Laida down and helping her to listen to all of what the women had to share with us. I learned that real-life science doesn't need to be done all alone; sometimes a team is needed to make meaning.

Marine Biology Research

Vallie Raymond (WA) writes:

I became involved with the Port Townsend Marine Science Center three and a half years ago, when my mom signed us up for a docent class the center taught. Since then, I've worked as a volunteer when the center is open to the public and have gotten to know the animals in the observation and touch tanks.

Vallie collecting plankton

The project I'm doing now is somewhat like the one I wrote about my brother and I doing in the book *Real Lives*, but my brother lost interest shortly after I wrote about it, so I revised the study to my capability and interest. Basically, the study records and videotapes how plankton changes in a year.

I am now going down to the science center twice a week. I take their plankton net to a lower floating boat launch and tow the net horizontally ten times under the water surface. Then that sample is put under a microscope connected to a TV and VCR so that the plankton is projected onto the TV screen. I document the sample on videotape and on a spread sheet a staff member and I put together on their computer. The information I document include: date, time, quantity of diatoms, quantity of zooplankton, percentage of plants to animals. There's a space for me to sketch the most common plants and animals I see. I'm going to teach this study to a girl who is also interested in plankton, and she will be continuing the study for me while I'm in Minnesota for three months. The project was also presented to a girl who lives in Tacoma and she is planning to start a project like mine, but with her own alterations.

The science center has also asked me to help teach various classes, and since I'm down there so often I've gotten to feed the animals and clean the tanks and help test the quality of the water on the center's boat, which they let me drive.

I didn't think I would ever be this interested in marine biology and have so many opportunities. I feel very fortunate to have the center accessible to me.

Finding Mentors for Astronomy and Biology

From Madalene Axford Murphy (PA):

Early on, our son Christian began to reach the limits of his father's and my knowledge in science and math, and it became obvious that these would be major pursuits in his life. At first I cheerfully expanded my own knowledge, learning along with him, but finally I had neither the time nor the interest to keep up with him. We met this situation in a number of ways.

Several years earlier, we had bought a good basic telescope on the advice of an expert at the Buhl Science Center in Pittsburgh. Later, we added a good microscope. The cheap models available in discount department stores and many catalogs are difficult or impossible to keep in focus and seem designed to frustrate kids' attempts, particularly if they want to work on their own. We had all done some fooling around with each instrument, so we knew the proper way of handling them. And we had done some reading in basic books about constellations. The telescope wasn't used much for a year or two, and then Christian decided to drag it out. He became fascinated with astronomy, read all the books by Asimov he could get his hands on and anything else on the topic the library had to offer.

Eventually he began to feel he needed some help. We discovered an astronomy group that met one evening a month, and he began to attend meetings. He discovered that one of the founders of the group was giving a 12-session seminar on astronomy for adults at our local nature center. On the recommendation of the naturalist there (a friend of his), he was allowed to sign up, though he was only 11. The first evening, he came home with about ten pages of small print that had to be read for the next class. This was not going to be a warm, fuzzy retelling of myths about constellations with a few facts thrown in here and there about planets and such, but rather a no-holds-barred immersion course in technical astronomy. I was concerned, but Christian wasn't. He plowed through the reading and was disappointed when the classes were over. Did he understand everything? No, nor did many of the adults in the class, but words like "parallax" and "gradient" had become part of his vocabulary and he knew a whole lot more about telescopes and the science of astronomy than he had before.

Another group, the Audubon Society, helped open up several aspects of biology for him. We had gone on several wonderful Audubon field trips when we lived in Connecticut. We knew the group was much smaller here in rural Pennsylvania, but we began attending meetings to get to know what they had to offer. When they started planning their annual Christmas Bird Count, Christian and I decided to participate. Of course we could recognize chickadees, cardinals, and nuthatches, but beyond that, neither of us were sure of our identifying skills. One of the Society's more active members was a biologist who worked at a nearby fish research lab, and I asked if we could tag along when he went on the bird count. The bird count itself was not a great success: periods of freezing rain kept most of the birds out of sight and made me think they were definitely displaying intelligence superior to the humans on that particular occasion. But we did see a couple of species we had never seen before, and saw the holes made by a pileated woodpecker.

But the biggest success of the bird count was the friendship that developed between Christian and Bob, the biologist. Bob invited Christian on other bird counts and for the last two years has taken him along as a timekeeper/recorder on an intense five-hour government sponsored survey of birds. Christian has become quite skilled at identifying birds and is even trying to improve his ability to recognize their calls.

The summer after the original bird count, Christian discovered he could volunteer at the fish research lab where Bob worked, and he ended up working two eight-hour days a week. He worked on computers in one section and on a project in another section where Bob worked that involved sampling the number of fish eggs in various streams in the Northeast. Christian learned a lot about lab techniques and about the amount of tedious work required to get accurate results for a study.

All of these biology activities took place during Christian's "high school" years, a time when homeschooling parents and sometimes children often begin to get a bit more nervous about whether they need to become more traditional, particularly if the children are planning on college. Christian did decide to use textbooks to fill in gaps in his knowledge of science, and activities like those I just described made the textbook knowledge real and useful.

Chemistry was never a major interest for Christian, but for a long time he thought he might be a physicist, fueled by his love of astronomy and his readings of biographies of fascinating people like Richard Feynman. He heavily used a textbook for physics, perhaps because I was little help beyond the beginning basics and we could find no living resource nearby. We tried one of the most approachable of the physics professors at a local university. Christian attended a science day where the professor set up "physics toys," as he called them, for junior and senior high students. He didn't take Christian's questions seriously, either giving him a superficial answer or telling him not to worry about how the toys worked.

But Christian supplemented his textbook knowledge of physics with wide reading in periodicals like *Science News*, *Scientific American*, and a host of others that were much more current than any textbooks could be. And he did finally meet a nuclear physicist, the father of his older sister Emily's roommate her freshman year at St. John's College. Christian had a number of long conversations with him. He was one of the people who helped Christian make up his mind to apply to a liberal arts college with good math and science departments instead of a large, technically oriented one.

Physics ended up being the preferred topic of any of Christian's science fair projects. Up until two years ago, a science fair was an annual event at our house, with lots of other families participating. No prizes were given because our science fairs were not meant to be a competition but rather a sharing of interests and discoveries. They provided a reason to delve a little more deeply into a subject and offered a patient and understanding audience with whom to practice communicating ideas. Our family always looked forward to these fairs. Christian's projects ranged from rockets to lenses to pendulums.

As in most things, each of our three children had differing levels of interest in and a different relationship with science. By the time Emily was 13, she was less and less interested in taking nature walks with her younger brother and sister. She did, however, get interested in raising honey bees, and ended up taking a three-day adult workshop on bees and beekeeping at a local college that specialized in agriculture and horticulture.

But Emily's main interests were toward the literary/historical aspects of life. She was not interested in a scientifically oriented career (she is now applying to graduate schools in museum studies) and so her main goal was to be literate enough in scientific terminology and techniques to understand newspaper articles and issues that might affect her daily life. Her own voracious reading, which included books like Lewis Thomas's *The Lives of a Cell*, accomplished that. She also dabbled in a chemistry textbook long enough to learn about chemical formulae, the table of the elements, and other basic information.

Clare, who is 15 and our last official homeschooler, gathered quite a bit of scientific information over the years and her science fair projects were fun and factual. We used to tease her that she would always do something on her "pet of the year," because her projects often centered on her turtle or her chickens or her geese, all of which took a great deal of research on her part to understand how to keep them alive and healthy. She would make up displays of charts of the anatomy of the particular animal, talk about its behavior, and climax the presentation with a living example of the animal.

But she was mostly content to read about science and quietly make collections of wildflowers or whatever. Just as Christian reached out to scientists, Clare is doing the same thing with history, which is an overwhelming interest to her the way science and math are to Christian. And just as Clare's scientific knowledge has benefited from the spillover's of Christian's discoveries, Christian's knowledge of history has been expanded by the intensity of Clare's interests.

Latino Homeschoolers

Understanding the System, Reclaiming Control

Milagros Chil of Massachusetts writes:

In the Dominican Republic, where I was born and lived for nineteen years, I went to a small private school. In general, things were OK. I had wonderful teachers. My mother was always home when I came home from school, and I realize, looking back, that I learned to read and write and do math at home, not in school. I don't know how she found the time, but my mother always had time to help me out. I was too shy in school to ask questions or admit when I didn't understand something, and I would come home with frustrations. My mother would always sit down with me and help me solve whatever it was.

When I came to this country, I saw my youngest brothers and sisters attending public schools here, and I saw results that I didn't like. In some instances, school was used against the parents, or used to put the children against the parents. It was a big thing, as it is for families of any culture, to come to the U.S. and have the children start school here. Usually, the kids learn English but the parents don't, and so the parents don't learn to communicate with the school. They don't know what the schools expect from them or from their children, and they lose connection with their children, in all senses of the word. They begin to assume that their kids know more than they do, and the kids may even believe that too.

In my case, the situation was somewhat different because I could speak English by the time my daughter, Sharyl, was starting school. But there were still many things about her school experience that I didn't like. When she started first grade, I asked the principal if I could go in and see her during the day. It was her first experience being away from the family. He said, "You don't have to worry. Once she enters this door, she's mine." That hurt me, and made me think a lot. It was as if they stole her from me. I tried once again to see her in the classroom, and again the principal told me I couldn't. Again he said, "Don't worry, she's fine." Who was he to tell me that she was fine? Did he check with me to see what "fine" meant to me?

Another problem I had was with how the school handled Sharyl's eating. At that time, Sharyl was not a child who got up and had breakfast in the morning. Getting up was hard for her, and eating in the morning was even harder. It felt like a punishment to her, although we were trying to get some protein into her in the morning so that she would be aware and awake and able to handle the schoolday. Of course, in school she wasn't allowed to eat until lunchtime, and she ate very slowly. Often she would just begin and then they would tell her the time was up. A "lunch mother," as they called it, was supposed to supervise, making sure that the kids ate and so on. But one time when I was there with Sharyl, I saw a group of kids come up to Sharyl, ask what she had for lunch, and then say, "Yuck!" I told them, "Food isn't yuck just because it's different." The lunch mother didn't even notice what was happening. I thought she would be there to tell the kids about different cultures or something like that. Some of the kids also spit in her food, and on other occasions were rude to her or didn't want to play with her, maybe because she was new and they all knew each other already and had their groups. I would tell her to talk to the teachers but it seemed as though nothing got solved.

In general, when Sharyl was in school I felt that I totally lost track of who she was and how she was doing. I was working full time, and she would go to an after school program. We would get home about 6:30, and because Sharyl needed a lot of sleep, she would be in bed by 8:00. By the time I fed dinner to her and her younger sister and got them ready for bed, there was no time left.

I also felt that my voice, as a parent, was not heard. I would get notices asking parents to be on a board, but when I volunteered, I was never selected. I have to say that although the school had kids from lots of different backgrounds, I never saw anyone from a minority background on the board.

Then, I had an encounter with the principal when Sharyl was in second grade. Smoking was not allowed on school grounds, and one day when I was dropping Sharyl off, I caught the janitor smoking in front of the children. I approached him and asked him not to smoke in front of my child, and he said "Shut up" to me. I was upset, but I left. The second time, when it happened again, I went to talk to the principal about it. I said I was upset to see the janitor smoking in front of the children, and she said it was inconsiderate of me to complain, because, "Can't you see that he's been removing snow since 6:00 in the morning?" She came out of her office screaming at me, and it was very embarrassing. Sharyl's teacher and all the kids in her classroom could hear everything. When I went to work, a lot of the Latinos there, who have had to overcome a lot of things in the U.S., suggested I write to the Board of Education. I got a reply that they had sent to the principal saying that smoking wasn't allowed on the school grounds and they should remind the janitor of that. I was glad to get a reply, but still, the incident was very embar-

I would like for other Latinos to know and understand that yes, we can be in control of our children and our children's education, even in this country, and no, school in this country is not always best for our children.

rassing.

•I heard about homeschooling when I met Dawn Lease, who used to work at Holt Associates. At first, when I heard she was homeschooling, I thought she was doing it for special reasons. I didn't know it was something anyone could do. She told me that yes, anyone could homeschool, and she suggested I call Day Farenga, who lives in the same town that I do. When I talked to Day, I started getting excited about homeschooling, and then I went to the Holt Associates conference. That's when I made up my mind one hundred percent that this is what we would do. In fact, I realized that I had been homeschooling already, because Sharyl had learned a lot of things from us when she was younger.

In the beginning, Sharyl was excited about the idea of homeschooling. Then she became afraid that she would miss things at school, and she thought I was going to sit her down in the house with a chalk board and teach her for six hours a day. She wasn't sure she would like that. I tried to explain to her what it would be like, but Sharyl doesn't believe things until she sees them. During the summer we started doing things together. We went to the science museum and talked about what we saw. We went to Niagara Falls and later read all about it. When Sharyl asked,"When are you going to start homeschooling me?" and I explained that we were already doing it, she got very excited.

Now she really likes homeschooling. When she remembers what school was like, she says, "It's so boring when they make you read these things you don't want to read, and they make you sit down and do math when you don't want to." She realizes that she has a lot more freedom, and she's proud to say that she's a homeschooler.

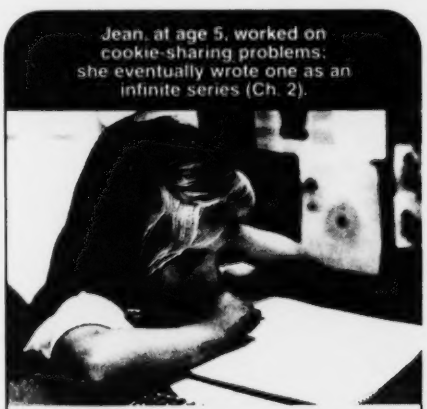
I've seen her come a long way in these two months of homeschooling. She was so jumpy before, so unable to relax or focus on anything. Now she's still active, but she's much calmer. Her energy is more focused. She's always practicing dance, and she's learned to jump rope. The other day she was sitting in the kitchen reading at 11:30 in the evening, all by herself, because she was in love with the book. I said, "You're not going to bed?" and she begged, "Just let me read a bit more."

Another major result of homeschooling is that the closeness between Sharyl and her younger sister Luisa has grown. Sharyl started school when Luisa was a baby, and they didn't have much time together. Sharyl is learning to cope with her sister now, and that brings a lot of happiness to me. I see how distant a lot of brothers and sisters in this country are, and now I think I understand why I wonder what would have happened if Sharyl had continued going to school. She and Luisa would be like strangers. Also, I feel that I'm getting to know Sharyl so much better. I'm working part time, she's not going to school, and we have much more time together.

As for the question of Sharyl's exposure to American culture, I don't think school is the only place she can get that, and in fact I don't want her to get it there. She has a lot of homeschooled friends who are American, and it's very easy to go to the library to learn about American culture or American history, if there are things I don't know. She meets other kids through church, too. She's living here, in this country, so she has constant touch with this culture. But at the same time, I'm able to tell her and read to her about the parts of American culture that I don't like. I feel more secure, because I can monitor what she's learning and be more involved with it. I want her to see my ideas and then, when she's older, to make her own decisions about what traditions she wants to follow.

I have talked to many Latino parents who don't agree with what's going on in the schools but trust that the people in the school system know better than the parents what's good for their children. Many don't know or understand the system and so are afraid of even saying something against it. I have talked about homeschooling to a couple of my relatives who are professionals and have lived in the U.S. for many years. One of them is a teacher. When I mentioned homeschooling, the reply was, "How can you do that? Do they allow you to do it?" I have also heard, "How are you going to teach your daughter English?"

I think we need to unite forces and voices, and also educate ourselves more about this new country and its rules and regulations. We need to learn that we don't need to lose or forget our culture, but rather to learn about the one here and then make our decision about which one to follow. I would like to see and hear more exposure of homeschooling culture to the Latino community. I would like for other Latinos to know and understand that yes, we can be in control of our children and our children's education, even in this country, and no, school in this country is not always best for our children. If more Latinos homeschooled, I think there would be more family connection, more Latino professionals, and more consciousness of our own culture.


Jean, at age 5, worked on cookie-sharing problems; she eventually wrote one as an infinite series (Ch. 2).

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Self-Educating – with the Library's Help

Adrienne Reed Storey of Massachusetts writes:

Libraries have been central to my self-education both when I was enduring school and when I was finally freed from it. Memories of the tail end of my sophomore year of high school consist largely of sleeping through Physiology class and reading through Geometry class, exhaustedly waiting out the hours until I had time for myself – time I often spent at the local university library. I was doing some rather extensive research on the author Jack Kerouac, which I started after reading his most famous novel, *On the Road*. Knowing that this novel was fiction based on real people and real happenings, I was intrigued to find out more about them. I had started by searching the computer catalog's various data bases for Kerouac-related books and materials. In doing so, I used as many subject headings as I could possibly think of. I couldn't tear myself away from the computer for hours because I knew that there must be more books pertaining to the subject under obscure headings. I would usually spend the bulk of my library time doing just this – searching the computer as thoroughly as I possibly could, treating it as an irresistible puzzle of sorts. A glance at a clock, or hunger pains, or a darkening sky would oftentimes be what would alert me back to reality and send me racing around the vast rooms of the library to find as many of the books as I had call numbers for, to check them out and carry them home.

I made these types of visits as often as I could, gaining more and more leads from the books I found. One find I made was a record collection of Jack reading poetry to jazz music, which included a rather extensive bibliography of his written works. Novels were a small percentage of this list; it consisted mostly of poems and short pieces published in various periodicals, some very obscure. I typed a copy of this bibliography for myself and proceeded to try to track down each item. This was quite a challenge, but I was motivated to find what I knew existed. This led me to search microfiche for old periodicals, search the film room for some historical videos, and call endless video stores, video companies, and book shops. I made many triumphs, finding pieces, xeroxing them, and checking them off my list.

The conclusion of my junior year marked the end of my formal schooling, and I instantly celebrated my long-awaited freedom with almost daily visits to the library.

I found myself becoming very familiar with names and books and references having to do with Kerouac and related subjects. When I visited the special collections room of the library, I ended up in a conversation with the librarian about the area of my research, and I found that I could truly hold my own. We chatted for quite a while, exchanging information and Kerouac-talk. He proceeded to show me some pieces I had not heard of, including an entire volumed encyclopedia of personalities of the Beat generation. It was just this kind of respect from and collaboration with adults that I found to be so empowering and beneficial and that was so lacking in my classes at school. This librarian took me seriously, not knowing my age or background but basing his respect on what I showed him I knew in the conversation we had. He shared materials with me as a fellow researcher, not as a teacher/authority.

My increasing familiarity with this library led me to seek out other subjects as well. After reading Grace Llewellyn's *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, I almost immediately went to the library to look up all of the books and topics I had highlighted while reading it. Sometimes in the process of looking for a book I would run into some intriguing section of the library and become happily sidetracked. No visit was long enough, and rather than concluding any area of study, each visit opened more and more doors. I often planned subsequent visits for my free afternoons and weekends.

When my family moved to Massachusetts at the beginning of my junior year, finding a good library was a top priority of mine. This became a research project of its own as I tried out several, heard of more, and finally settled on the Boston Public Research Library. This library did not have the thoroughness or wealth of obscure materials that the university library I used in California had, but I was impressed by its organization and accessibility as well as its atmosphere. I enjoyed figuring out how it was run, discovering a process of ordering books that were then delivered to me at one of the many old, long tables that filled the main study room. I loved the tediousness of flipping through card catalogs rather than using a computer as well as the exhuasting but worthwhile process of searching through periodical indexes. I discovered specialized rooms for fine arts, music, government documents, rare books, and science. I made use of

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the highly knowledgeable social science and humanities librarians, employing such bountiful resources as atlases and anthropological indexes.

It was the continued use and exploration of this library that helped relieve the burden of the school year. It brought me considerable peace of mind to look into things that really interested me, knowing that once school was over I could spend all my time on them. And I did. The conclusion of my junior year marked the end of my formal schooling, and I instantly celebrated my long-awaited freedom with almost daily visits to the library. I did not desire any more schedules or assignments and so simply delved into any area that struck me. My choices stemmed from specific questions I had, but as quickly as I found answers, more questions arose out of my increased awareness of things to have questions about. For example, when I looked up the Rastafarians in hopes of gaining insight into the philosophy behind reggae lyrics, I was led to Jamaican politics and history, some about Ethiopia, and some major aspects of African-American history that I had never heard of before. While I was learning much about reggae music, I also realized how little I knew about *any* aspect of the history of African peoples, and so I began to read about Marcus Garvey, Haile Selassie, Malcolm X, several reggae musicians, and Ras Tafari philosophers.

My enjoyment of Andean folk music then led me to become interested in learning more about the indigenous struggle in Ecuador. After buying an album from a local group of musicians from Ecuador, I learned, from their song lyrics and album notes, about their political struggle for equality and respect. I went to the library trying to find out about the relationship between the Ecuadorean government and the Quichua (indigenous people of Ecuador). I embarked upon a tedious and sometimes frustrating search for information, as I found that very little had been written about the subject. After an exhaustive search of the card catalog, numerous visits to the librarian's desk, and hours flipping through an index to anthropological journals, I found only one document that covered the exact area of my interest. I studied this document very carefully and thoroughly. I took long notes and copied down quotes, returning to the library every day to continue where I had left off on the previous one, until I had expended this resource from cover to cover. In studying this document so closely, I ended up disagreeing with the author's own eventual conclusion. Thus, by the time I had moved on to to other subjects, I had not only learned much about indigenous-government relations in Ecuador but had also developed my own thoughts about opinions about the subject.

This excitement continued as I researched more and more subjects, and as I enjoyed the fruits of my pursuits, I became aware that I was working and learning on a level I had never obtained through school. I was taking thorough notes because I had a desire to use and understand them, compared to the doodles, one-word references, and cynical comments that constituted my note-taking in school. I kept my work well organized and in files, whereas I had often left my schoolwork rumpled on the bottom of my backpack and would always throw it away once it was graded. I wrote reactions to some of what I had read in order to develop my thoughts, whereas in school I had *had* to write responses to things I didn't care about or had no personal need to write about and would therefore make up some reaction that would serve only the purpose of fulfilling a requirement. I even developed projects to do when I sought an organized approach to a large amount of research. For example, I planned and started a cultural timeline from *Australopithecines* to the present time when I was researching whether human nature was good or evil. I discontinued this project when I was satisfied with the information I got on the subject in other ways – a flexibility I never had in school.

Again, I only did projects in school because they were required of me, and therefore their impact on me was minimal. Even so, I maintained relatively good grades in school by turning in work I did not care about and put little effort into. For these reasons, I could see that I simply had higher expectations of myself than my teachers at school had had of me. I also had more respect for myself than I had gotten from schools, as I valued learning those things I felt I needed to know, but schools simply had not cared to ask what I needed.

I have retained what I have learned from my research in libraries, whereas even when I received the highest grade possible in a class, I retained very little, or none, of the subject matter covered. Another impact my library research has had on me is that I have become an optimist. I anticipate the future with excitement and confidence, and I have an incredible love of life, whereas I was once overwhelmed and stuck by a reality that school played a large role in conveying to me. Rather than doubting myself when I am confronted by self-declared authority figures whose pictures of reality are often unbearably depressing, I simply schedule a trip to the library. Rather than becoming discouraged when those who claim responsibility to teach me label me idealistic, ignorant, and even selfish, I go to that place where I have access to people who may have a different point of view. In this way, these many authors I draw upon are my teachers, who share with me how people *can* grow all of their own food, how a person *can* bike across the country, how some cultures *do* live peacefully, how human nature really is sufficient and healthy, and how happiness *is* possible and worth obtaining. The library continues to be a very important resource for my self-education because it is a great source of empowerment for me actually to live in a way that I feel good about.

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Challenges & Concerns

When Kids and Parents are Different

Alison McKee (WI) writes:

I found myself absorbed in the stories about shy children ["Challenges and Concerns," GWS #99] and, at the same time, wondering why I was so drawn in by them, because my children, Christian and Georgina, are not shy at all. After thinking about this for a few days, I have come to the conclusion that these stories draw me in because they reflect my desire to change my children, just the tiniest bit, so that they fit into my description of "perfect child" more effortlessly. I think that all parents, no matter who their children are, feel this urge from time to time. I know this has been part of my personal struggle as I have had to learn to unschool our children.

I have read every issue of GWS and have been in many discussions with parents who unschool their children. More than once my readings and discussions have yielded comments like, "That's fine for you, but my child ...". I can be speaking these words or hearing them. They seem to reflect the feeling that the grass *must* be greener on the other side of the fence.

Living with children who are always on the go, as mine are, can be quite exhausting. When I read about those who are shy and retiring, I find myself wishing for life on the other side of that fence. But I know better. With much work on myself I have come to know that there are assets to having children who are so outgoing. Although my husband David and I may retire exhausted, we are blessed with uniquely gifted children. It is our job to let go of our notions of perfect children and let them be who they are, not who we want them to be.

Over the years, my desire to slow Georgina down has caused both of us stress. My temperament calls me to be at home, and hers calls her to be on the run from dawn until dark. In the most difficult times, I find myself silently repeating the words, "Show me the way." This mantra has yielded great things. During the past twelve years I have come to understand that Georgina's high energy level, although exhausting for me, *is* her giftedness. It has given her the ability to accomplish things that I will never be able to achieve. She channels it into teaching children to swim; making lively entertainment for the children she cares for; making fast friends with both adults and peers; volunteering long hours in a local pet store; and singing her way through all of these endeavors.

To the parents of children who are shy, stories about the accomplishments of children like Georgina might bring great frustration, just as stories about shy children can sometimes cause me frustration. I have had to learn to repeat my mantra and let my children be. There is nothing I can do to contain Christian and Georgina, just as there is nothing the parent of a reclusive child can do to make that child more outgoing. Let us not be drawn into believing that the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. It simply isn't. We parents must attempt to find the positive in each of our children. If we want our children to be happy, we must allow them to be who they are, provide them with safe boundaries, and teach them the give and take of living in community with one another. If we can accomplish this, we will have given our children the greatest of gifts: themselves.

Learning Boredom: A Necessary Skill?

[SS:] In GWS #101 I said that our attitudes toward childhood are deeply affected by what we believe the rest of life will be like. A reader's letter shows how sadly true this is:

Every morning I hoped the afternoon would bring home a happy child, not the sad, angry one my son was becoming. One spring morning he refused to get out of bed. Refused to return to school. He'd always been so energetic, so ready for the day, I knew to take him seriously. Yes, the classes can be boring and the textbooks are dull, I said, but don't you have fun with your friends?

It turned out that a group of boys had been chasing him around, taunting him. For two years they hadn't let him play with most anyone because the ringleader said not to and threatened the other kids if they did. Now they were chasing him. Yesterday a boy had kicked and swung his backpack at my son. The teacher said to stop, but didn't do anything. Instead of discussing the situation, fostering growth and learning, she chose to ignore it. Now I saw that his back was full of bruises – from his neck to his waist there was barely an inch left untouched.

When I talked to the principal, she said she'd talk to the boys about teasing; she hadn't seen the fight. Easter vacation came and went. So did we.

The principal called a few days later to tell me my son must return to school, that keeping him home was not really legal. I expressed my own opinion about the situation, including the fact that my son was bored in school, to which she made the astounding observation that if he did not learn how to handle boredom now, how could he expect to handle it on the job? When I asked about the other boys she replied that she had talked to them, but what more did I expect her to do? I followed up with a letter, copies to the child welfare agent of the district, who wrote back that my child was safe at school!

After I met with four teachers, the principal, the district psychologist, and the district coordinator of gifted programming, it was clear that "hands were tied" just as the principal had told me in reference to the physical assualt. They expressed no ideas on how to make school more interesting for my son, nor did they seem to have

any ideas at all. The district's school psychologist, who'd earlier suggested an elite private school in a neighboring city (tuition $10,000/yr) stated that "even star basketball players play on losing teams." If only other parents knew how he viewed their children.

Our daughter joined us in studying at home the next fall. Homeschooling has been a relief, a blessing, a challenge, and an enormous success. We are out in the wider community learning, dancing, playing, singing, studying more in a week than school covers in a year. It has been said that an artist is never poor. Well, that is due to creativity, flexibility, and having a unique view of life. Homeschooling, then, must be the ultimate art of learning because our life is so much richer now.

More Thoughts on Labeling

N.S. Gill (MN) writes:

Patricia Munro questions assumptions about learning disabilities ["When Labels Help Instead of Hurt," GWS #101]. She concludes that for her daughter with Attention Deficit Disorder, the label was beneficial because the child no longer thought she was stupid when she couldn't perform up to her school's standards. The daughter also began to feel better when she acted up, because she could blame ADD for her uncontrollable impulses. Patricia has a point.

On the other hand, labeling theory explains that once you give someone a label, he starts living up to it. My husband was told when he was young that he wasn't very smart. When he couldn't read in fifth grade, he was sent back to fourth, where he had a year of remedial reading. He learned to read a little, eventually graduating (barely, because he still read at a fourth grade level) from high school and going on to art school. He still believes he's stupid, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In this era in which self-esteem is so highly valued, his early labeling is a definite hindrance.

My chief fear about labeling, however, is not so much that people will start living up to the label but that they will hide behind it, using it as a shield to defend themselves against charges of irresponsibility. There's already too much blaming of others, too little acceptance of responsibility for our actions. To the extent that a child with ADD can blame the ADD for her acting up, I think it's dangerous.

Be that as it may, my son has shown signs of having inherited the reading problem of his father and cousin. His cousin was labeled with a non-specific reading disability and told that he could never go to college.When he answered his tenth grade multiple choices tests by making an attractive pattern of the dots, his mother decided it was time for a reading tutor. Against the advice of the public school system, he had a reading tutor for eleventh grade. At the end of a year of patience, and phonics, he could read as well as anyone. Questioning authority himself, he's now enrolled in junior college.

I read to my son almost constantly

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when he was little, doing all the things that were supposed to guarantee an early reader, but he didn't learn to read. Then came a hearing test in which he demonstrated a mid-range hearing loss. Since his father's and cousin's difficulty in reading was largely an auditory problem, the hearing loss concerned me, but not the doctor. My son was 7 when I almost gave up on his learning to distinguish the sounds of letters. Thanks to an awful computer phonics program and hours spent listening to its monotone, he did, finally, succeed in distinguishing S from F. Two years later he first began to read – out of boredom during the long waits at the orthodontist's. His progress was slow, but within four months he could get through a *Snoopy* or *Garfield* comic.

The most recent event to raise concern about his learning abilities is his participation in a choir. To my delight he is doing quite well in this 1 1/2-hour class, the first formal class he's ever taken. The first half hour is recorder and the next hour, singing. He is learning to play the recorder; he's learning about rests, tempos, whole and half notes. In fact, he's learning everything except how to sing the same tune as everyone else.

I had the inspiration that if I could get him working on concentration, it would help. To this end I've been trying to get him to read The Lord's Prayer in Latin (since Latin *is* a phonetic language), sounding out every letter according to a pronunciation chart. The first time we went through the prayer, it must have taken an hour. It certainly cost a few tears and two lost tempers. By the end of the week he had memorized the first six words and it took 35 minutes to decode the rest. We took a break for the weekend and on Monday we had a breakthrough: it took ten minutes. We've been doing it for about three weeks now. It still takes ten minutes, but there are no tears. What's more, he told me that the Latin has been helping his reading of *Snoopy*. Instead of skipping the hard words, he is now sounding them out. As to whether this is helping his singing, I can't say.

I'm relatively certain that he's inherited the family reading problem. However, I have no intention of getting him tested. Once tested he'll have to live with that label for the rest of his life. As was the case with his cousin, the trick to overcoming this so-called disability is to have a teacher who works consistently and patiently with him. In my son's case, he'll have to settle for consistent and hope that's enough. This disability – as may be the case with others – is really the teacher's problem, not the child's. And that's where homeschooling makes all the difference.

Overcoming Doubts of First Year

From Ken Lipman-Stern (NJ):

Last year I wrote to GWS about my fears and doubts as a new homeschooling dad. It was our first year and I had the nagging thought that the kids in GWS were special in that they were so self-motivated. I got some very supportive letters at home, and GWS printed others (issue #90, #91). One mom wrote saying that possibly in a few months my fears would disappear as interesting projects took off in our home. Now, more than a year later, I am convinced of the fun, and the living quality, of our homeschooling adventure.

As I trust that things will emerge, I continually learn about the opportunities that life presents. An example: my kids and I were on the way to a pet shop. In the parking lot, Sam, age 7, found a match book that advertised 1000 stamps for free. He wanted to do it and we wrote our address on the match book and sent it to the address shown. A few weeks later the 1000 stamps arrived, with more stamps "on approval," which means if you want to keep them you have to pay for them. Also enclosed was an advertisement for a world stamp album to display the stamps. It was around the winter holiday season, so the stamp album became a present. The album arrived with more stamps on approval.

We told another homeschooling dad about our adventure. He had tried setting up a stamp dealing business but had stopped. He still had lots of inventory, which he gave us. This included thousands of stamps and

another album. Sam was off and running. I brought out my childhood stamp album that I had apparently saved for this moment. The two of us spent a splendid afternoon putting stamps into whichever album had a corresponding picture of that stamp. A few days later, Sam told me about soaking stamps in water to get them off envelopes (something he had learned from the other dad), and we soaked about a hundred stamps we had been given. At about the same time, we rented a kids' movie called *Tommy Tricker and the Stamp Travelers*, which depicted stamp collecting in such a magical and adventurous way that the house buzzed with stamps and talk about stamps.

Collecting stamps is an easy springboard to discussions about geography, world cultures, art, etc. And now Sam is initiating this use of his time, which really thrills me.

Sam has a circle of cronies that he hangs out with – mostly boys his own age or a little older. Once these folks are home from school, Sam is out with them. But during school time, he, my younger son Jonah (4), and I have time to enjoy one another and slowly let the day develop. Liz, my wife, has the afternoon and evening shift. Sam is really establishing a camaraderie with his younger brother as they play together, which I don't feel would be as deep if Sam were in school since once his friends are home from school he rarely prefers to play with Jonah. The time when other kids are in school is sacred time for us to be together.

Both boys are initiating drawing projects in which their own styles are emerging. Jonah is delighted that he can suggest, with a few lines, legs that are in back of the leg seen in an animal's profile. Sam is creating detailed drawings and fantasy maps with mysterious made-up symbols that remind me of Mayan Pre-Colombian art.

I've been making terrariums with the boys and other neighborhood kids. The most ambitious collective work has been a 30-gallon terrarium/aquarium that mimics the forest floor leading to a pool with waterfalls. Sam takes care of the fish and a small turtle. Among other things, we learned about the native red-brown shale that is underneath this part of New Jersey. Another homeschooler and Sam dredged the local pond with a large, hand-held net, and we had a whole community of pond insects in our terrarium pool.

Now that our homeschooling adventure is established and we have dear friends nearby who are homeschooling, I'm really enjoying the ever-unfolding process. Thanks to everyone for their input last year.

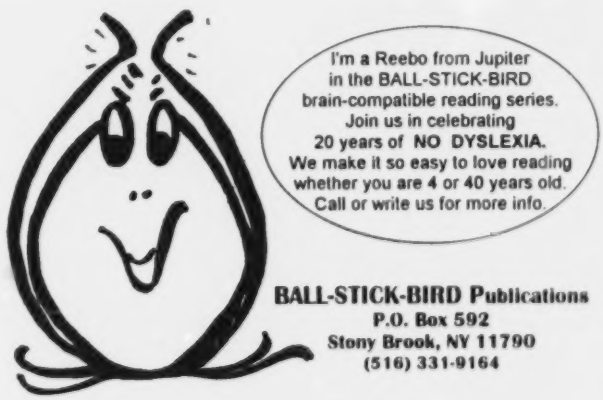
Are There Independent Driver's Ed Courses?

Anna Woofenden of Washington writes:

I'm a 15 1/2-year-old homeschooler, and I recently got my driver's permit. My problem is that in Washington state, anyone 18 or younger must take driver's education to get their license. The public high school offers driver's ed, but it's every morning at 6:30, which wouldn't work for me because we live on a small island and the first ferry is at 6:30. Plus, there's no way that I could go into town five mornings a week for a whole semester.

We've looked into private driving schools too. There is one, but it's more than half an hour away and it costs $250 and the class is at the same time as my ballet lessons, which I can't miss.

So my question is, are there any independent driver's ed programs that you can do at home? Is there any way that we can use the school curriculum and the teacher's guide and just have my parents teach me? Has anyone else had this problem and how did they get around it?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Watching Children Learn

Inspired by a Writer

Andrea Quarracino of Pennsylvania writes:

When I get older, I want to become a published author. I have had this goal for many years, and I have been creating my own stories since before I was old enough to write. No one has ever really sat me down and said, "Now, Andrea, this is how you write a story." I was basically left alone to build and create at my own will.

I did take one creative writing class several years ago, and there I learned about the finer points of writing, such as grammatical tips, what a metaphor is, etc. But I feel as though I learned the most about writing this summer, when I had a session with an author who is already published.

Joyce is the mother of one of my good friends. Since I am basically in awe of anyone who had already achieved the ranks of a "real" author, I was pleasantly surprised when Joyce told me that she would like to see some of *my* work. So I prepared one of my current stories and arranged a date to talk to Joyce. She invited me into her studio, a small room towards the back of her farm house. The room was filled with shelves, book, art, and other things which obviously meant a lot to her. We sat together as Joyce sipped coffee and read my work.

After she was through reading, she commended me on what I had written, let me ask questions, and gave me suggestions towards things I might want to try. She even suggested that I make a map of the fantasy kingdom in my story so that it would be easier for me to refer to events that took place as I wrote.

When she excused herself to answer a telephone call, it occurred to me that there was something different about this woman, something which set her apart from many other adults. It struck me that Joyce really seemed to love what she was doing. When she talked about writing, light could have filled the room.

I learned a lot from this experience, and not just because of the helpful tips I received from Joyce. I learned that it takes a lot to be an author. You need to be creative, to set and meet goals for yourself, to be open minded on many issues. But most important, you need to love what you are doing and to be yourself. These are things I doubt I would have been able to learn in a classroom, because I find that few people who have been hired to teach writing actually love writing itself.

She Thinks Her Writing is Wrong

[SS:] Mentor, *the newsletter of the Home Education League of Parents, invited its readers to ask me questions about kids' writing and then published my answers. I thought GWS readers might like to see one of these exchanges; if readers tell me they're interested, I can print the other questions-and-answers in future issues of GWS (or take new questions).* Mentor *is available for $15/year (12 issues) from HELP, Suite 131, 3208 Cahuenga Blvd - West, Los Angeles CA 90068; 1-800-582-9061.*

Q. A five year old used to like writing until someone told her that she was forming her letters wrong, and now she won't write at all. What can be done about this?

A. I'd like to know who told her this. If it was another child, particularly a child who goes to school, it might be appropriate to let your child know that in school children are taught to write letters in certain ways, and this child was probably reflecting what she had been told. I suppose the same could be said even if it was an adult who made the comment.

In any case, the thing to do is to let the child know that there is no right way to form letters. Show her how many different ways we make letters. You can start with different typefaces in books, on signs, in magazines (if you have a word processor with different fonts, you can show it that way). Even more important, though, in terms of her current situation, is the different ways that people handwrite. Let your daughter see how different people's handwriting looks. I'm sure that the handwriting of your various family members is different, for example. How can there be only one right way to form letters when no two people form them in the same way?

Then, when it comes to her own writing (that is, forming letters), I might say to her, "How many different ways can you make the letter A?" (or any other letter). John Holt once made a rough draft of a book called "The Book of A," in which he wrote the letter "A" in as many ways as he could think of. The point is to have fun with this, to show that it's silly to think that there's only one way to form letters, and to help your child feel good about being able to come up with many ways to form them. Maybe at some point you could talk about how many ways you can write the letter and still have it be recognizable as that letter. There are many ways you can write an "A" and still have people recognize that it is an A (especially in context, which brings up another point. When people are reading for meaning, they use contextual clues. So it's easier to recognize an "A" in the middle of "CAT" than it is to recognize

it by itself, and it's far easier to recognize the word CAT in a sentence about cats than as an isolated word.) But are there some variations on the "A" that would be so far out that people couldn't tell what letter it was anymore? *That's* when the letter is "wrong" – or rather, that's when it is no longer serving its purpose of communication. But as long as people can read it, it's not wrong. These would be things your daughter could figure out through this sort of playing around and experimenting.

Kids who are not taught one specific way to form the letters usually experiment (over time) until they come up with the way that feels easiest and fastest for them. Nancy Wallace wrote about how her daughter Vita at first experimented with making the letters as fancily and ornately as she could, because she liked drawing and saw the letters primarily as something to draw. But when she began to have things to say, she began to want to get the letters on paper as quickly and easily as possible, just as we all do when we're trying to have our pen keep up with our thoughts. So then Vita tried to find the simplest way to form the letter.

This brings me to something else. If it's really true that the five year old won't write at all now, I would try to show her that forming letters on paper is n*ot the central part of writing*. The central and most important part of writing is *saying something*. So in addition to making that effort to show her that it doesn't matter how you form letters, I would make a big effort to show her that she can dictate, type, speak into a tape recorder and copy it over later (or ask someone else to copy it). She can use stencil, rubber stamps, string, cardboard, a cookie cutter, whatever (although I admit that these latter methods, being slower, will probably be more fun as ways to make a few letters or words than as ways to get a whole story or letter out there).

Finally, there's a chapter in my book *Writing Because We Love To* called "Tools of the Trade" that speaks to this issue of different ways of getting writing out there.

Ready to Work on Math

Annie Shapiro (CT) writes:

Throughout my homeschooling life I've had a lot of freedom to do, or not do, whatever I wanted. One of the things I didn't do was math. I hated it, and I didn't see much point to learning it beyond the basic skills. I knew enough to get by with, enough for everyday life. But when I was in about seventh grade, my parents and I started talking about the fact that if I wanted to go to college (and they weren't going to make me), I was going to have to buckle down and learn math, science, history, and so forth. We agreed that I would start working on those things at the beginning of ninth grade. So that gave me a year or two to get used to the idea and work myself up to doing it. I still didn't want to, but now I saw how important it was and I was willing to give it my best shot.

Of all the subjects I started learning in ninth grade, math was the

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one I was most afraid of. We started with a fourth grade workbook, working for a half hour a day. It was a long half hour. I was quite scared of the subject, and every time I reached a new concept I would get panicky and was sure I couldn't do it. But since it was only fourth grade, after all, it always turned out to be very do-able. I know that at the beginning, my dad worried that because I had done so little math, my brain cells were understimulated or something, and I really wouldn't be able to learn it. But after a few panic attacks I realized that it wasn't going to suddenly get hard. Then I could calm down and learn it.

My mom helped me a lot at first. She explained each new thing and kept reassuring me that I would be able to learn it. In the past I had sometimes worked on math with my dad, because he loves the subject and has always been excited about teaching it. But I never did well with him. My mom could relate to me more easily and didn't seem quite so overjoyed with math, which worked better for me.

So I worked my way through fourth, fifth, and sixth grade workbooks in just a few months. Then I got a Saxon Algebra 1/2 textbook, and I've been using that since then. Now I'm almost done with it. In December I decided to double the time I spend on math, because at the rate I was going, I wouldn't be ready for the SATs. I was able to keep up doing an hour a day, and it's been working well. But I have to make it first priority and get it over with early in the day or it won't happen.

I've been doing the tests and quizzes that go along with that Saxon book. At this point I usually get all the answers right. After I did my first few tests I was concerned, because I sometimes got one or two wrong — until I was told that in school that would still be an A!

I don't need my mom's help as much anymore. The Saxon book has good explanations so I don't need my mom to explain each new thing to me. But I still go to her when I have a problem.

Now I'm glad I didn't do math every day since kindergarten. Instead, I was able to spend that time doing what interested me. And I was able to learn math later, when I had a real reason to learn it. Also, my attitude has changed quite a bit. Whereas I used to hate and fear math, I now have a feeling of accomplishment, and sometimes it's even a tiny bit fun.

Intensive Study of World War II

Jo-Anne Beirne (Australia) writes:

Some homeschooling friends, whom we hadn't seen for about two years, were visiting. As part of the conversation, they mentioned that they had been chasing up the life and times of an uncle who flew in World War II, for their history studies. I suggested that Gregory (14) might be able to help them at least a little in this area, given that in the last three years, under his own direction and in his own time, he has "read out" the nonfiction sections of two libraries and purchased, begged, or borrowed every other book he could find on World War II. Gregory has not been particular about the topic, whether it be planes, tanks, engines, armaments, spies, the Resistance, speeches, the Holocaust, great escapes, the life stories of politicians, generals, admirals, and those of lower ranks, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (three times) and *2194 Days of War* (which, I kid you not, details what happened each day). The child has fed an almighty passion, sometimes at 1000 pages a week.

His mother and father have on occasion fretted about his World War II absorption, but as it has never interfered with his other work or his devotion to sport, we would console ourselves that a good knowledge of history makes for a well-rounded adult. Perhaps he will do history at university, we thought. Emphatically no, says he. "Why let someone make something boring that you can do perfectly well for your own pleasure?"

He has never had a history lesson in his life, though he has certainly read a great deal of history even before exploring the ins and outs of World War II. Like so many others before him, he built Lego castles and read/dreamed about the exploits of

the Vikings, Romans, Greeks, Scots, Arabs, the American War of Independence and the Civil War. He knows lots of historical correlations and facts and figures that show us up in conversations sometimes, though mostly people have no idea about the depth of his World War II knowledge because he doesn't tell anyone. When I was commenting angrily, after watching a TV show awhile back, about the atrocities committed by Germans in World War II, he quietly said to me that he could give me some books to "read about the other side of that story. The Allies have similar acts they are not proud of either; it was war, you know," he told me.

So we have watched, waited, and on occasions been delighted by what all his reading was teaching him – especially when those homeschooling friends were visiting. As our visitors were leaving, they asked if they could borrow a couple of books, one being on Rommel. Gregory, who was standing beside me and is really a very shy person, looked Steve, the father of the visiting family, straight in the eye and said, "These are great books and the one about Rommel is my favorite, but I would suggest you read a number of books on these topics before you make up your mind. Lots of people have different opinions about the same thing and the books translated from German are different again. You need to get the big picture."

I was really proud of my 14 year old! He has never had a formal history lesson, never been told "why" we study history, yet he has found out some pretty valuable knowledge for himself from his own reading. He actually felt it was important to tell Steve that there are different sides to every story, that you must read widely and not trust a single source. He shared his self-taught observation. This knowledge, it seems to me, is something that many experienced reporters, politicians, and textbook writers have yet to discover. We are pacifists but it warms my heart to know that Gregory will always care about "the big picture." He knows how leaders' decisions can send hundreds of thousands to their deaths, that negotiation and understanding can achieve peace, and that we cannot forget the Holocaust.

Mothers' Reasons for Homeschooling

Daphne Slocombe (MA) writes:

You asked if others have written out their reasons for homeschooling [see GWS #99, "Top Ten Reasons"]. I wrote up a list of my reasons recently because many people I meet are interested in hearing about homeschooling, and I found myself telling one group of reasons one time and then considering other reasons the next time. Eventually I wanted to gather them all in one place. My current list is not complete; new reasons to homeschool turn up every month:

1. I think it's wrong to shut children up in ugly buildings under fluorescent lights for several hours a day, almost ten months of the year. It is important and nourishing – physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually – to be outside, to see what the weather's doing, to poke around in the dirt and see who lives there, to walk around and see what nature's up to right now, to watch animals of all sizes and have time to wonder about them, to enjoy the forms of plants and how they change, to feel the air, to be in the light. It seems criminal to me, the hours we steal from children, shutting them away from natural events.

Maybe I should mention that we are all book lovers and Thalia (6) is an avid reader. We're not at all anti-books, but I do feel that the balance in schools is off. Teachers seem to value book experiences far more than active, first-hand experiences. This could be counted as a whole separate reason for homeschooling, because the first-hand experiences that we value are not only experiences with nature but with people, work, making things, travel, and so on. Homeschoolers have much more time for this kind of thing.

2. I want my children to spend time with people I admire, whose values and actions I respect, people I'd be proud to have my children model themselves on. Few public school teachers fall into this category, and those who do would be better known outside of school than in its hamper-

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ing, artificial atmosphere. To send my children to school would be to force them to spend several hours a day with people not of their own choosing, people I myself would not choose to spend time with.

3. Far from wanting them to learn to obey and to conform, just to be convenient to a teacher trying to control an unwieldy group, I want my children to develop a strong inner authority, to be tolerant of the divergent opinions of others but never to become deaf to their own voice amid all the others. I believe this inner strength comes from being treated with respect, seriously listened to, and responded to as someone of equal importance even if not of equal experience.

4. To interrupt children when they are working interferes with their learning, frustrates them, and sends a message that what they do is not important. Real learning, deep learning that becomes part of the self, happens when a person is fully engaged, deeply absorbed, completely oblivious of everything else. In school this kind of absorption is penalized.

5. Learning is one of life's great pleasures. Real learning begins with the individual, with wonder and longing. Forced teaching destroys interest in its subject and, worse, makes it hard to feel what it is that you are genuinely interested in.

6. I feel it's important to learn to govern your own time and to initiate and carry through your own projects. School dictates how the child will use her time, 'til she may find it hard to feel her own interests and to undertake her own projects. School rewards obedience and pleasing authorities far more than independence, self-reliance, or taking initiative.

7. Because of the number of children in a classroom, no child can be allowed to speak spontaneously. People, and especially children, need to respond and to talk when they meet new material. Many need to move around and to touch. The insistence on quiet and passivity in the classroom inhibits learning.

8. The idea of grades – forcing children to be in herds of people their age - fosters neither real learning nor responsible behavior. I want my children to be comfortable with, and to find models among, people of all ages.

9. Time to be alone is precious – time to think and daydream and wonder, time to follow trails and cook up schemes, time to hear your own inner voice.

10. Children's play is more important than schoolwork.

11. Schools have become tied to the television culture.

12. Competitive consumerism thrives in schools.

13. Schools constantly reinforce one of the most destructive life habits: comparing yourself to others.

I'm amazed to find myself saying things like, "Children's play is more important than schoolwork." I come from an academically oriented family, so this sounds heretical to my ears. But I have come slowly to this position from observing children, talking to parents, and talking to adults about how they learned best as children and about which childhood experiences connected with their deepest interests and led to their life work.

Mary Beth Nelson wrote her list in the July/August 1993 issue of HearthNotes, the newsletter of the Connecticut Home Educators Association:

10. We can all stay up as late as we want reading and wave goodbye to the school bus in our pajamas.

9.I don't have to match socks or iron school uniforms.

8. Snow days whenever we want. Sun days, too!

7. Talking during lunch is OK, and I don't have to pack it.

6. You can go to the library while the other kids are in school and have the whole place to yourself.

5. No parent/teacher meetings.

4. Going to the bathroom does not require anyone's permission.

3. I don't have to worry about the class bully.

2. No fund raisers.

1. I don't have to try to find three matching thermos tops every morning, when I know full well that at least one is still in someone's desk full of sour milk!

Making Connections

GWS readers are hooking up with one another in all sorts of ways!

Jodi riding the Clarks' horse in a show

Summer in Alaska

Sarabeth Matilsky (NJ) writes:

Last December, there was a declassified ad in GWS which ran something like this: "We are interested in hosting a homeschooled teenager for a summer of fine arts study in Fairbanks." I answered the ad. I corresponded with the Chapman family for six months, and I went to Fairbanks, Alaska in June. As well as me, the Chapmans were hosting a homeschooled girl from New Mexico, and in their family were two boys, 9 and 5, and two girls, 15 and 18 (they also homeschool).

It was the most wonderful summer of my life. I stayed with them for six weeks, and, with Nellie Chapman (the 15 year old) and the girl from New Mexico, I attended the University of Alaska Summer Fine Arts Camp, majoring in theater. It was a very intensive course, lasting five days a week for a month. We would leave in the morning and I wouldn't get back until eight at night. It was the first experience I have had with that much structure, and it was a little hard at first, but I had great teachers and I got used to it quickly.

Over six weeks I got really close to the girls and it was very sad at the airport when I left. But we have all been corresponding, and Nellie is planning to come to New Jersey in January. I can't wait!

Working with Horses

Lorraine Clark, 134 Spring Creek Ln, Pottstown PA 19464, writes:

About two years ago, when we bought our horse farm, I wrote to GWS saying that we would welcome young helpers. Jodi Sangster from Texas read this and contacted me. She has come here two summers now. I asked Jodi to do a little write-up about her visit so that I could pass it on to you. We have been very happy with Jodi and I would certainly like other teens to continue with the program that we and Jodi have evolved, especially throughout the year.

Jodi writes:

I've always loved being around horses, so when I saw the article in GWS titled "Work on a Horse Farm," it sounded like a great opportunity for me. Also, I plan to be a veterinarian, and most vet schools today really look for experience with animals on the applications. I had tried to get a volunteer summer job with several veterinarians near us, but the minimum age was 16 (I'm 14). Spring Creek Farm sounded like a place where I could work with and be around horses.

Here at the farm, the day is structured around the fifteen horses that are boarded here and the five horses that the Clarks own. The horses are fed and brought in early in the morning. Most of the afternoon is filled with feeding, turn-out, and mucking out stalls. Various other jobs, such as carrying bales of hay down from the barn, or grooming one of the boarders' horses, also pop up. On paper, this doesn't look like much work, but believe me, it's time-consuming.

I recommend that teens come to Spring Creek Farm only if they enjoy the hard, physical labor that comes from catering to the needs of twenty horses. Don't expect to get paid for your work, either; on the contrary, I pay $15 a day to the Clarks for room and board. It may sound like I'm telling people not to come, but really, I'm not. I'm merely trying to warn off those who don't truly love horses and the work that comes with them. I've enjoyed my stay at Spring Creek Farm a lot, and I'm truly glad that I came.

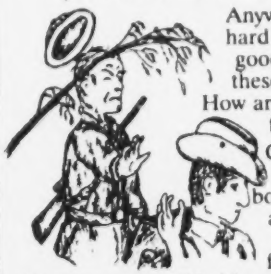
Lorraine comments:

Jodi also enjoyed several hours of free time each day, which she used

(continued on page 25)

It's a jungle out there . . .

(*Or is it a rain forest?*)



Anyway, it's hard to find good help these days. How are you faring? Children need books that are fun **and** fruitful.

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Focus

When Teachers Don't Realize They're Teaching

For this issue's Focus, we asked several young GWS readers to write about the experience of learning from people who don't specifically intend to be teaching (and may be unaware that they're doing it).

Sister Teaches Her to Value Her Work

From Laura Brion (CT):

Most people wouldn't consider the marks my 4-year-old sister Meredith makes on paper to be writing, but I do. I think they are as valid as my own writing. When I see her carefully repeating specific letters she's invented, I realize how serious she is. Meredith writes purposefully, on the lines, focusing intently on her work. At first glance, she appears to be a little girl just playing with paper and pencils. Looking again, you see that she is working very hard at something important.

Meredith is learning, and at the same time she's teaching me. She recognizes the value of her work and takes it seriously, regardless of the opinions of those around her. She teaches me to value my own work and to take it seriously. That attitude affects everything that I do, whether writing or folding laundry or working at the farm where I have a job. Valuing my own writing helps me to understand that it is just as important as someone else's. If I didn't value it, I don't think I'd be sending it to GWS, for example. And at the farm, I don't think I would feel my work was worth what the owner pays me if I didn't take it seriously and understand that what I do is important. It's the same with folding laundry – even if you fold laundry every day, it's still important, and it makes a difference.

We can be told about character and values, but they only become real to us when we see them in others' actions. We must have as much respect for learning through observation as we do for instructional learning, for observation is what enables us to put facts to good use.

Learning about Childbirth

From Corianna Sichel (NJ):

My mother began teaching Bradley Childbirth Classes when I was one year old. Instead of sending me to the babysitter's house, she let me stay with her. I would sit in my mother's lap while she was teaching. As I got older, I began to do other things while she was teaching her class. I might read a book to myself (of course, I did not know how to read, but I somehow managed it), or I might play with my dolls. But I always was there at least once while she was teaching. My mother usually would show a childbirth video for her students to watch. I would always listen to and watch it.

Through all this, I learned more about childbirth than most kids my age. My mother teases me now that I know so much I could teach one of the classes. She never meant to teach me, but I learned from listening over eight years (I am 9 now). I liked to play birth with my dolls and some of my friends. I would end up having to teach them. When my younger sister was born five years ago, I was well equipped with knowledge of what was happening. I was there when she was born, and I understood most of it.

I just learned from listening. It wasn't as hard as sitting down to learn to read. That was not fun. In fact it was torture, but I finally learned enough to satisfy my mother. I think that I like learning when no one means to sit down and teach me. I find it a lot more fun and more interesting.

Organization and Teamwork

From Lynda Burris of Florida:

I am a Senior Girl Scout, and last Saturday I helped at an all-day event meant to teach Junior Girl Scouts (9-12 year olds) camp skills. The girls themselves really learned a

lot, but the older girls who were helping also learned a lot. This program was set up so that these Junior Girl Scouts would know more about camping skills before they went camping. Inadvertently, though, the women running this program also taught a lot to the older girls who were all experienced campers already.

From these women, I learned about how things go more smoothly when they are planned out and everyone knows what her job is. We learned that one the hard way, as a lot of the instructions that were to be carried out were carried word of mouth by the cadettes and seniors at this event. Needless to say, a lot of things got very mixed up. I learned that miscommunication happens a lot when a lot of information is being carried to a lot of people by word of mouth.

I assisted in the first-aid workshop and though I don't think the instructor realized it, she was teaching me as well as the girls. I learned a lot about what you need to have in your first-aid kit – latex gloves, the mask you use for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, how to sterilize a needle, and how to do the Heimlich maneuver. So I feel as though I got a mini first aid training while helping the trainer teach the girls.

And of course I learned about teamwork and how fast you can get things done if you all pitch in and try. I learned how to keep going even if you didn't sleep well the night before. I didn't get a chance to tell the instructors and the girls how much I learned, as I really didn't realize how much I learned until I sat down to write this. By keeping my eyes, ears, and awareness open and alert, I pick up a world of knowledge.

Grandmother Teaches about Cards – and about Life

From Jesse Retchko (GA):

When you think about a 73-year-old grandmother, you think of an old woman sitting on a porch in a rocking chair. Well, not my Nana. She decided when she was young that she was not going to get any older than 40. She still plays Nintendo, golf, and tennis, and travels in her R.V. about twice a year. Right now she and my pop are in the process of remodeling their house – themselves. Yesterday we called and she was on the roof working on the shingles.

I have learned a lot of things from my grandmother. Without knowing it, she taught me some strategies in poker and blackjack. She really enjoys competition, and whenever the grandchildren get together, we always get a game going. Never once has she sat down and told me how to play. I just kind of picked up on her playing style and mixed it with mine. And now, quite honestly, I have only been beaten a couple of times when I've played with my friends.

Although I'm only 13, Nana has taught me a lot about life. I've learned that in blackjack if you've got 16 or over, you're taking a big risk to ask to be hit. But you might want to be hit to fake out your opponents. This is true with life also. A lot of times you have to take risks to get what you want. I've learned that a poker face can help you in many situations. I've learned from her that being old (or young) is a state of mind. Her favorite saying is, "Can't never could!"

Learning Outdoor Skills from a Friend

From Tamar Mali (OR):

I've learned Indian survival skills from a friend named Iain Shaefer. Iain's family has a close Indian friend who is always showing survival skills to Iain when they visit.

Iain and I get together to play at each other's houses about twice a month. Every time we get together, I learn many things from him. In the two years that I've known him, I have learned how to sharpen knives, how to build different types of shelters, how to plant Indian corn in a variety of styles, how to treat a wasp sting making use of things growing in nature, how to save a dog from getting an infection from porcupine quills. The list goes on and on.

I learned all these skills by playing and working alongside my friend. When we get together, we venture out into the woods. In the winter, we start small fires with one match (of course we have our parents' permission first). One time we used our pocket knives to gather pitch wood, a wood that is literally hardened sap. We then tried to see who could soak the wood in water the longest and then light it successfully (pitch wood has the quality of functioning like a waterproof match). After we did this, our knives were a bit dull, and Iain showed me how to sharpen my knife on a special sharpening stone.

Once, when I was at Iain's house, I helped him and his younger sister Brenna water their garden. I learned the Indian way of planting corn. It was planted in clusters of five, in two lines, and a square foot apart.

That day, Brenna got stung. She was trying to rescue a

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drowning wasp from a bucket of water. Iain, calmly knowing what to do, borrowed my knife to gather Plantain and tied it to the infected area with a long slab of grass. As soon as we finished tying the last knot, we walked back to the house so Brenna could rest.

One nice day in January, Iain and I ventured out to the property next to mine. When my dog, Golda, ran off and barked, I wasn't alarmed until I heard her crying from pain. Then I saw our other dog, Perry, run to the rescue. We hurried through the thick brush, only to find the dogs in a defeat position from a porcupine. Both dogs had quills from the tips of their noses to the top of their muzzles. We rushed back home and Iain said he'd just recently learned, from an Indian woman, how to remove quills. We used kitchen scissors to cut the tips of the quills to release the suction and then pliers to remove the quills.

At least 75% of what I know, I learn just from being around other people. I think this kind of learning is most often found in homeschooling. When learning by experiencing, I am learning without fake pressure and make-believe tests. This makes my intake much more memorable, as opposed to having a teacher teach me with made-up examples while I try to remember what is being taught. Conventionally, the teacher is teaching out of context. I learn best from actual experience, and I discovered this from thinking about what I remember most and thinking about where I got the information that I so vividly recall.

Observing Her Father in the Garden

From Helen Van Doren (OH):

I have learned a lot about gardening from my father. Each of us has our own little garden, and it happens often that I'm working on my garden with my dad working nearby, or that I learn from watching something that he does.

I learned that you need to thin vegetables from watching my dad do it. I learned that you should probably not plant most things before May or after. May is a good time for planting most things. I learned that because one time I tried planing corn in July, and it didn't work very well.

I learned about fertilizing from watching my dad do it, and once I watched him start seeds in the house in the winter, and then let them get used to the outdoor weather gradually. I hadn't known about doing that, but after I watched him, I started some broccoli in the house myself.

I think my dad sees that I know how to do these things, but he doesn't realize that I've learned them from him. There's a very different feeling when you learn things from watching or from working with someone. You have the feeling that you aren't being pushed to learn it; you just learn it. If you learn something by watching, you probably want to learn it. And sometimes you don't want to be taught when someone sits down and wants to teach you.

Working with Others in the Theater

From Megan Cohen of California:

This summer I worked at a professional theatre on a show directed by Sidney Lumet. I helped sew the costumes and teach the apprentices new stitches, and I learned new sewing techniques and technicalities. I also helped prime the sets, and I entered lighting data into the computer.

I learned that no matter what size, all theatres are basically the same. Everybody is rushing like crazy to get the show onstage, and it never looks like it'll happen on time, but it always does. All actors, from those who have won Tonys and Academy Awards to amateurs, get nervous before an opening.

The costumer told me I had been a big help. When I told her that I had learned a lot, she seemed surprised. "That's great," she said, smiling.

Another time I got to learn about the theatre by working in it was when I was Jack in *Jack Takes it Back*, a modernized and politicized version of the fairytale "Jack and the Beanstalk," with the San Francisco Mime Troupe. We toured schools in the San Francisco bay area with a cast of five adults and me and a set that could be squeezed into the back of a minivan. Throughout the year-and-a-half course of the show, we had about five or six different 45-minute scripts, 11 or 12 different cast members (with no understudies), and about five different directors. I learned how to adapt to changes in the cast and also how to learn a script quickly. I learned a terrific amount about acting from my favorite of the directors, Dan Chumley. I don't think he realized that he was teaching me so much, because most directors that I've worked with are just trying to get the show to look good and run smoothly and, last but not least, captivate and interest the audience. He taught me a lot about the physical side of acting. I read somewhere that about 90% of how someone interprets what you say is based on body language. So onstage, it's very important that you move in the right way. Just by being in a show, I've probably learned more than I could in any physical acting class, which is offered here for about $400. Score one for the autodidactresses.

I've also learned a lot from Andrea Marcovicci. She is an actress and singer. I had a chance to be in a show with her when I was 8 (I'm 11 now). We had a few times every show when we would be backstage together waiting for our cues. We would joke around and play word games. I now have four of her albums, which I play ad nauseam. She is an amazing torch singer. I have learned so much about singing and acting from listening to her sing. We went to see a concert that she sang this summer, and in one song she became so into the emotion that she actually began to cry, and I mean real tears. She couldn't know that from performing she was actually teaching someone about acting. But I certainly have learned a lot from watching her!

What are your *experiences of learning from other people? Write and tell us!*

(continued from page 21)

mostly to read. She also received free riding lessons (for which our local students pay $30 a lesson), and she developed enough expertise through these lessons to be entrusted to groom, tack up (meaning put proper bridle, saddle, etc. on a horse), and go for practice rides on her own. Jodi also visited several horse shows in this area, which have all levels of riders and horses, including some Olympic equestrian participants.

Traveling Together

Sonnet Pierce (MO) has written in previous issues of GWS about her interest in becoming a vegetarian chef and hooking up with others in the vegetarian and homeschooling community. These excerpts are from a longer letter Sonnet wrote about her recent trip:

On September 22nd I returned from an excellent 10-week trip. My friend Kim Kopel from St. Louis went with me. Kim and I have been pen-pals for years, and she had mentioned in one of her letters that she wanted to do some traveling, so I thought of her when I was trying to find someone to go with me. I gave her a call and she expressed interest in traveling with me. We had never met so she took the bus to my home for a visit. We hit it off, and to many people's amazement we never got tired of each other's company during our entire trip.

... We were off on a trip that would take us through 15 states and one Canadian province, covering a distance of over 5000 miles ...

[From Ohio] we drove to Johnstown, PA for a vegetarian conference. I worked on the staff helping with cooking demos, and I also gave my own cooking demo. This was my second vegetarian conference. I really enjoy going to the conferences; they give me an opportunity to meet a lot of interesting people, including other vegetarian cooks. ... I met Dr. Attwood, the doctor whose book I wrote 25 recipes for earlier this year. I was glad to be able to meet him after having talked to him on the phone and having worked with him through the mail.

After the conference we visited Sally Clinton on her farm in Eastern Pennsylvania. I have written a few articles for a teenage vegetarian magazine that she is in charge of. Staying with her gave us a chance to rest. We had had a busy week at the conference, and we needed to recover.

[After traveling through New York and New England,] we were off to Harborside, Maine, where we visited Helen Nearing. She and her husband co-wrote many books and magazine articles telling about their lives. They built their homes and grew large gardens that provided them with food all year. The house and surrounding land is beautiful, and there is an excellent view of the ocean. She was a very neat lady and I am glad that I got the opportunity to meet her.

... We continued on to Farmington, where we visited the Ketcham family. I have been pen-pals with their daughter for years, and it is always pleasurable meeting people with whom I have corresponded. ...

It was great having the opportunity to take the trip, and I am so glad that I did. I went to so many places that I had never been before, met a lot of great people, and I had *so much fun.*

Sonnet tells us that she is planning a European trip for next spring, summer, and fall, and she is looking for other homeschoolers who might already be planning such a trip or who might be interested in joining her at some point. You can write to Sonnet directly (her address is in our Directory.)

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Just Starting Out...

From a longer piece by Annie Tummino of Massachusetts:

There was very little thinking (or joy, or enrichment) involved in the work [for school]. It was churning out assignments and taking tests so the authorities could grade, judge, and define me. ... As someone who had been defined as being one of the "top track kids" a long time ago, I was expected to get good grades. In elementary school, I always got A's, practically without trying. High school was different. It did require a bit of studying. In the back of my head I considered doing only what I wanted to, oblivious to grades, but knew that that would put my future options in jeopardy, and dismissed it as crazy anyway. At the same time, I went around telling people that high school grades should not be what your future (like college) are based on because it just wasn't fair.

... My parents knew I was unhappy with school. My friend Carla and I wanted to go to an alternative high school called Sudbury Valley. ... But because I had no transportation and a mother just starting Harvard Divinity School, it was not realistic that I could go there, even though the price was reasonable.

So I went on feeling helpless and angry because my life was being run by outside forces that gave me no choices. I became more cynical about life, thinking somewhere in the back of my head, "It shouldn't have to be this way."

Then came the big revelation: there were people who agreed with me! My parents' friends, Maureen and Michael, have two kids and live in Cambridge. They are homeschoolers. ... When Maureen came to visit one day near the end of ninth grade, we began talking about school and why I didn't like it. (My mom had told her that much.) It was crazy and wonderful to hear someone say, "You're right. School is oppressive. It's not necessary. In fact, we don't even make our kids go!" Then Maureen sent me two books: *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* and *Real Lives*. By the time I finished *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, I knew that if I didn't end up quitting school, it would be out of fear, and that's a dumb reason. After Grace states her case about why you should quit, she gives you many ideas about how to self-direct your learning ... . So now I am a registered homeschooler, or more accurately, a self-directed learner.

... There are several settings in which I spend my time. I have art lessons and Yoga once a week. My father works in Boston and my mother attends Harvard Divinity School, so I'm able to spend time in the city. I have been going to Cambridge about twice a week, where I can just browse in the shops, observe the people, the street musicians, and all that stuff, go to a museum, or sit in on a class or lecture at HDS. I recently got hired at the GWS offices. There I'll be putting together packages for new subscribers, stapling, labeling, and doing other similar work.

At home I have many things to work on. I read novels and non-fiction books, the newspaper and magazines. I write essays and poetry, and work on *Driftwood* [the zine Annie and a friend are publishing]. I'm working on *Philosophy Made Simple: A Comprehensive Course for Self-Study and Review*. I draw, paint, think, and listen to music. My social studies project is the National Peace Essay Contest, my topic being the ethnic conflict in Rwanda. For science I'm doing a research project on toxic waste in Massachusetts. Two former teachers are there to help me with these projects when I need it. I'm going to start Geometry with a tutor in the near future.

In school I was constantly comparing myself to eight hundred of my peers, judging my teachers, my work, and everything in general. Now I hold the power of movement and creation in my hands, and my decisions and identity must come from within. I feel more in control and independent. Most of my energy is now going into positive things, while before I was running on a lot of negative energy. In that I have found the sense of meaning and purpose that I felt was absent before. I still feel the ups, downs, and sometimes complex emotions that accompany life, but I realize that they are part of a greater need to grow and understand life. They are not the results of living by a system that I don't believe in and can't change.

Now I hold the power of movement and creation in my hands, and my decisions and identity must come from within.

...and Looking Back

Tad Heuer (MA) wrote this essay for his college applications:

I didn't choose to be taught at home; my parents decided for me. I was four, and my toddler priorities lay elsewhere. Little did I know that I was volunteering for an educational experiment. Every September my parents and I had our annual discussion about continuing homeschooling versus sending me to regular school. I don't know if I thought school would be a bit boring or if I was afraid of change, but I always chose to stay home. I did go to school for a few classes and for violin lessons, but much of my time there was spent explaining my sporadic attendance to teachers and classmates. I grew accustomed to giving both rote and wry answers to questions like, "Do you watch TV all day?" The rote answer was, "No, of course not. I do the same things you do in school." The wry answer was, "Yes, from nine to noon," watching their faces form into expressions of disbelief. I didn't tell them I was watching Massachusetts Educational Television on PBS.

When discussing homeschooling with strangers or skeptical parents, the first question usually concerns socialization, often posed bluntly as, "Do you have any friends?" Sports and orchestra brought me into contact with kids my age, but even then it was a common interest rather than a common age that drew us together. Over the years, I found wonderful friends in Mendelssohn, O. Henry, a German woman on my paper route who was a World War II refugee, *Newsweek*, a paralyzed basketball coach who couldn't walk but still coached me as if he could, history books, and a range of musical instruments from viola to tinwhistle. People are always relieved to discover that I'm not a hermit.

Homeschooling gave me the freedom to explore and experiment. We traded houses with an Irish family and lived in Galway for a month. I was never given actual lessons in "how to write a sentence"; I learned as I wrote history essays. Few schools would have allowed me to research the sinking of the *Titanic*, but my parents let me read about it, build models of it, and learn about watertight bulkheads. (I even managed to finish my math book that year, too.)

As I got older, people started to ask if being taught at home was going to hinder me in college. After all, they said, you don't know what it's like to work for grades or take classroom tests. Maybe I did start to second-guess myself, so I took some college courses. My grades indicated what I learned from the professors, but not what I learned from the students. Many of them were older, juggling full-time jobs and their education, but they really wanted to be in class. One 47-year-old man who was in China during the Cultural Revolution said he was taking biology so "when my son asks why the grass is green, I can tell him."

Homeschooling was the right choice for me. It taught me to learn outside the classroom, inside the classroom, from other people, and from my own mistakes. Above all, homeschooling has given me the desire to continue learning for the rest of my life.

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Resources & Recommendations

Computer Games

Pat Farenga writes:

The computer industry is widely using a neologism to make games seem more "serious," more "adult:" "edutainment" is now used in catalogs and stores to describe all sorts of computer games that claim to have "educational" value. Some even brag that the games are so good the kids won't know that they're learning!

Of course everything in life is educational and people learn constantly, not just when they are in controlled "learning situations," but the split between living and learning is being further hastened by such Madison Avenue concepts as "edutainment." Can we no longer simply use computer programs and acknowledge the learning that accompanies our involvement with them as a desirable and unavoidable side effect, or must we assuage our guilt and others' anxieties about our time spent with computer games by labeling our encounters as primarily educational experiences? Will it be long before someone markets all the math and science involved in preparing food as "educooking?" How about conceiving of the rules, odds, and percentages of athletics as "edulletics?"

Further, it seems that no matter how user-friendly computer technology becomes, there is some educator willing to tell you how difficult it is to learn and how lucky you are that they are able to sell you their training system. Yet it isn't difficult to learn about computers in our society; all you really need is access to a computer, some tutoring from the manual or from a friend, and you're off. The growing computer literacy of our contemporary culture owes more to the free market than to the education market by far.

People of all ages learn essential computer skills, such as turning it on, starting an application, formatting disks, and shutting the computer down, regardless of whether the reason for using the computer was to play a game or to write. However, some people get anxious if they can't view children as being engaged in "educational experiences," so I decided to think of education lingo to describe our computer activities to such people. Perhaps we should call this game "curricutainment?"

Putt Putt Joins the Parade (published by Humongous Entertainment) is a gentle, whimsical adventure for children not yet ready to read who are just learning to use a computer. The game has high-quality speaking, sound effects, and music which makes it the favorite of our 5 year old, Alison. Just point and click with the mouse and Putt Putt moves; point and click on a sign or object and Putt Putt says, "It says..." or "Maybe I can use that to catch the dog?" Putt Putt is a car of undetermined gender who wants to participate in a parade. Before it can join the parade it needs to do various tasks, such as earn money for a car wash and find a pet. Along the way Putt Putt can explore, by pointing and clicking, just about every object in every one of the screens. The graphics are not state-of-the-art, but they have a calm, colorful appearance that is most inviting. Clicking on a pond makes a fish jump out; click again and a different fish jumps out; keep clicking and you create a fish jump free-for-all. Some objects are to be kept by Putt Putt and used to solve puzzles; clicking on some objects can cause them to behave in unexpected ways. There's lots of room for free-form exploration with this game, especially since you're not working against a clock or another player. Often my girls and their friends gather around the screen and say, "Try doing this...". The game's playability is very high and doesn't require much time from an adult to get a child running it all by him- or herself. Audrey, our 18-month old, certainly doesn't understand the object of the game, but she sure likes to click on things that make noises.

Here are some of Putt Putt's curricutainment possibilities: develops motor skills (example: executes clicking on desired object); problem solving (generates, primarily by using trial and error, though sometimes inductive and deductive reasoning, the solution needed before being able to proceed with game); addition and subtraction (need to collect and use money to get car washed); listening skills (appropriate responses given to verbal and sound clues given by computer).

Eagle Eye Mysteries in London (published by E.A. Kids/Broderbund) captured the attention of Lauren when I gave it to her for her 8th birthday. We haven't lived with it as long as the other games I mention, but Lauren, Dav, and I have had some good times with it so far. You choose to be a partner with either Jake or Jenny Eagle, who appear to be around 10 or 11, as you solve various mysteries while visiting the Eagles' relatives in England. Your computer partner keeps track of all the notes, maps, and photos, while you do all the thinking and observing. There is a lot of reading in this game. This is a great game for parents and children to do together, not just because of the reading but because of the many opportunities this game has for open-ended questions about the task at hand. We've discussed the history of the Tower of London, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and map reading in general with Lauren so far – and we've just done three of the fifty mysteries that come on disk. Each mystery has taken us between 1–3 hours to solve. When you are ready to solve the crime you must build your case by choosing from among all your clues and suspects the ones that seem right to you. Various curricutainment values:

Higher-Order Rule skills (generates, by selecting applicable clues, a case against a particular character). Concrete concept (identifies by naming particular hieroglyphics); map skills (uses map to get to certain locations); language arts (identifies and explains British colloquialisms); history and verbal information skills (states orally the significance of the Tower of London).

A-Train and Sim City 2000 (both distributed by Maxis Inc.) have long occupied my time and disk space. Both are games about building, managing, and growing cities, but each has a different slant. Both allow you to play a free-form, start-from-scratch game or use built-in scenarios that have defined winning positions that you need to accomplish by a certain time. A-Train lets you act as a rail baron and posits rail development as the central force for creating urban centers, so you spend lots of time laying track, creating train schedules, and shuttling raw materials and passengers to build cities around your railroads. Cities, roads, and all sorts of things grow or wither depending on how efficiently you plan and place them around your rails, and your ability to create rails depends on how well you invest your money. Be it in the stock market, real estate, or in more trains, learning to manage and grow your capital by paying attention to trends and urban developments becomes the key to success. Little details, like the changing of night and day, the seasons, and occasional UFO's and flocks of birds across the screen, make this game a unique experience. It does take longer to learn than most games, but it works on many more levels than most games.

Sim City 2000 is an update of an old favorite of mine, Sim City. In Sim City 2000 you get much more sophisticated color graphics and sound than in the old version, as well as a host of new tools and reports to enable you to develop your own city from scratch. In Sim City you're the mayor of the city. Sim City 2000 puts so much in your control: you can bulldoze terrain and divert rivers into submission to your plans or decide to have your city grow organically around the original terrain; you zone all property, set tax rates for residents, commercial businesses, and heavy industry (you can even set different rates for different industries depending on how much they pollute, etc.), build hospitals, police stations, fire stations, prisons, subways, water lines, electric lines. This game is more complicated than A-Train, though in my estimation a bit easier to master due to its very nice interface; A-Train can be a bit awkward for finding information and doing some actions. Further, here you have to set budgets for each department you create, as well as figure out what, if any, ordinances, such as parking fines, and programs, like CPR training, you are willing to fund. Learning the long-term consequences of your actions is one of the great features these simulation games have over the "search and destroy" games that litter much of the computer world.

The wonderful graphics and animations that constantly change on-screen depending upon your decisions as mayor make this an endlessly fascinating game to play. The ability to make or break each city is in your hands, not only from the way you respond to under- or over- development, but also from random natural disasters in this game (and one unnatural one - an alien spaceship). Unfortunately, your imagination is constrained by the programmer's vision of the world: I've tried building a city with no schools and no roads, just public transportation, parks, museums, and libraries; the Sim Citizens didn't care much for it and kept demanding that I build schools and roads! If only there were a Sim Town Meeting where I could try and convince Sim Citizens of alternatives to schools! Some curricutainment value of both games: Math skills (demonstrates, by interpreting charts and graphs correctly, the ability to budget money effectively, fund projects, use ratios and percentages); history and reading for a purpose (both games have excellent manuals); basic financial principles (buying and selling stocks, using loans, interest, investment in real estate); Cognitive strategy (adopts a strategy of imagining being a Sim Citizen or A-Train rail baron, to decide what actions to take to better plan a city or railroad).

I have to say that while I personally enjoy these two games a great deal, my kids just like to look at the graphics for a bit and have yet to show an interest in learning how to play them. This is probably due to their ages and the complexities of these games (my friends Spencer and Alex, 10 and 13, are fascinated by these games), and the fact that they don't want to encourage me to stay on the computer any more than I do already, since they want to get on and play *their* games!

Curricutainment can easily be extended to explain not just computer use but any number of real-life encounters to school officials. However, I don't recommend doing this unless absolutely necessary; using such language disembeds active learning from the incidents of life and places it in the realm of mental management by educators.

Homeschoolers' Bumper Stickers

Years ago we sold bumper stickers that advertised homeschooling and GWS and gave our address in Boston. When we moved to Cambridge, we never got around to creating new bumper stickers, and occasionally people ask us if any bumper stickers about homeschooling are available.

Endsley Marketing has three bumper stickers for sale: "Homeschool? Naturally", "Proud Parent of a Homeschooler", and "Homeschooling Honors All Students." They cost $1 each (including postage), and they're also available in quantity at wholesale costs, so homeschool groups could sell them to raise money. Endsley Marketing, 3397 Blair Dr, Los Angeles CA 90068; 213-874-9518; fax 213-874-8828.

Resources for Parents

We received a press release about *Parent's Resource Connection*, which contains over 180 listings of hard-to-find small press parenting publications, regional parenting magazines, local support groups, and national groups. It costs $3 for twelve pages, from PRC, Deanna Sletton, 5102 Deerwood Ln NE, Bemidji MN 56601.

1995 Directory of Families

Here is our complete 1995 Directory. Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those who ask to be listed, so that other GWS readers or other interested people may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information – last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses (e.g. "Jane Goldstein (MA) writes..."), that person is in the Directory. If the name is followed by the entire state name (e.g. "Jane Goldstein of Massachusetts writes..."), then that person is not in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used. If you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out or recycle it.

AL – Perry & Nancy GOODSON (Wendy/80, Derek/83, Dylan/86, Daren/89). Rt. 1 Box 440, Rockford 35136 ••• Shari HENRY & Tim JONES (TJ/85, Rebekah/89). 110 Fernwood Cir., Madison 35758 **(H)** ••• John & Cyndy LEWIS (Janice/77, David/79, Daniel/81, Mark/89). 1561 Said Rd., Semmes 36575 ••• Beth & Joe O'DONNELL (Sarah/85, Joshua/89). East Lake UMC Academy, 1603 Great Pine Rd., Birmingham 35235 ••• Stuart & Penny POPWELL (Luke/81, Laura/83). 2249 Wire Rd., Auburn 36830 ••• Buddy & Sherry SCHENCKER (Laura/88). Rt. 5 Box 600, Talladega 35160 ••• Ric & Cynthia SMITH (Hannah/85, Emma/88). 3302 S. Perry St., Montgomery 36105.

AK – Andrew & Deborah BYDLON (Matthew/89, Christopher/91, Cheyenne/93). 4300 University Dr. B1, Juneau 99801 **(H)** ••• Mark & Cynthia CEBULIAR (Katie/85, Zachary/86, Andrew/87, Jonathan/89, Destiny/91). 9324 Kavik, Anchorage 99515 ••• Melany & Pete SCUEVA (Christopher/82, Katie/83). 2104 Belair Dr., Anchorage 99517 **(H)** ••• Tom DILLON & Kathy GROSSMAN (Sam/82, Ed/85, Monty/88). PO Box 362, Nome 99762-0362 **(H)** ••• Karl & Nanuie ELLIS (Anika/84). PO Box 277, Kasilof 99610 ••• Debbie GRAVEL & Peter DWYER (Tristan/83, Garden/85, Mollie/89). 7941 S Tongass Hwy., Ketchikan 99901 **(H)** ••• Kay HACKNEY & Fred DeCICCO (Lucas/87). PO Box 10314, Fairbanks 99710 **(H)** ••• Janlee & Ken IRVING (Geoffrey/81, Bonnie/86, Brita/87). 2650 Home Run, Fairbanks 99709 **(H)** ••• Paul & Pat LUGIN (Matt/81, Katie/84). 1934 Tall Timbers Dr., Fairbanks 99709 ••• Valerie & Jeff MANFULL (Ashleigh/86, Frazier/93). 7421 Tangle Ct., Anchorage 99504 **(H)** ••• Gregory & Gayle TIPLADY (Allie/75, Connor/81, Graham/82). PO Box 3369, Palmer 99645 ••• Steve & Christine WARREN (Ginger/80, Mariah/83, Misty/86, Aaron/88). PO Box EDB, Ketchikan 99950-0040 **(H)** ••• Paul & Gayle YOUNG (Nathan/80, Tamar/83, Hilary/86). Box 8005, Port Alexander 99836 **(H)** ••• Richard & Carol ZDANOVEC (Kimberly/82, Marni/85). 1453 Birchwood Dr., Fairbanks 99709.

AZ – Cathy ALGER & Ed CUMMINS (Eli/86, Kaelin/89). Grand Canyon Natl. Pk., Tuweep Ranger Stn., Fredonia 86022 **(H)** ••• Anne & Jim DORRE (Matthew/78, Andrew/81). 345 S. Virginia St. #10, Prescott 86303 **(H)** ••• Jeffry & Deborah GERHART (Amanda/77, Sarah/79, Olivia/81, Laura/88, Emily/90, Valerie/92). 2420 S. Placita Hohokam, Tucson 85746 ••• Betty & David GYONGYOS (Megan/83, Katelyn/86). 3138 N. 83rd St., Scottsdale 85251 ••• Will & Thea HOFFMAN (Brian/78). 1430 Camino Amapola, Sierra Vista 85635 ••• Steve & Jackie JOHNSON (Toby/78, Levi/84). 33233 N. 224 Av., Wittmann 85361 ••• John & Cyndie KIMBALL (Sarah/84, Jennifer/86, Joshua/91). 3113 W. Los Gatos Dr., Phoenix 85027 ••• John & Suzi LORSON (Samantha/81, JD/86). 6915 E. Quail Run Rd., Paradise Valley 85253 ••• Don & Sue LOSCHEIDER (Nolan/85, Colin/88, Courtney/90). 842 Saddlehorn Rd., Sedona 86351 ••• Steve & Linda MARRIA (Darryl/85, Carolyn/90, Emily/94). 5116 Malachite, Tucson 85741 ••• Kim & Mike MARTIN (Lily/85, Tess/87, Theo/90, Clay/92). 526 W. 14 St., Tempe 85281 ••• Gary & Gwenn McCALEB (Ervn/77, Krista/77, Jessica/89). Box 295, Nutrioso 85932 **(H)** ••• Linde MOHR & Nandor FELSEN (Ariane/86, Zephyr/88). 1802 Sagewood Pl., Sierra Vista 85635 ••• Gwynne OKOREN (Adrian/91). PO Box 453, Wenden 85357 ••• John PEACEMAKER (Tiffany/75). 5029 W. Harmont Dr., Glendale 85302 ••• Uintah SHABAZZ & Dillon DOWNEY (Sante/75, Sonnet/77, Lexy/88). PO Box 668, Springerville 85938 **(H)** ••• Dov & Carolyn SHAPIRA (Isaac/86, Carmel/87, Charlotte/91). 15229 N. 25th Dr. #1, Phoenix 85023 ••• Roy & Susan TANIGUCHI (Salley/83). 10414 W. Mulberry Dr., Phoenix 85039.

AR – Chuck & Penne Davidson ARD (Brandon/81, Nike/86, Vince/88, Mark/90, Fawn/93). ARD Family Cooperative, 33 Thompson Dr., Clarksville 72830-4217 ••• Pat & Larry BERGMAN (Thomas/87, Ellen/91). PO Box 215, Yellville 17687 ••• Tom & Julie O'DAY (Meghann/79, Katherine/81, Bridget/84, Timothy/87, Conor/89, Ian/91). 600 Clara, Conway 72032 ••• Kevin & Priscilla TENNAL (Lianna/80, Laura/82, Catherine/86, David/90). 5119 C Street, Little Rock 72205 **(H)**

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Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1995 Directory (in this issue) Yes ___ No ___

Japan — Heather & James HACKETT (Mari/84, Noa/91) Nakayagiri 308-1, Matsudo, Chiba-271 ••• Sandy MATTHEWS & Chris GILMAN (Caitlin/82, Corinne/83) 7-1-49 Midorimachi #201, Kita-ku, KOBE 651-12 ••• Timothy & Junko RUSSELL (Shin/80, Ryo/86) USA Medflac — Japan, Unit 45011, APO AP 96343 **(H)**

The Netherlands — Sabina & Eduard deSTUDIER (Aaron/80) Hugo Verriesthof 21-II, 1064 HW, Amsterdam ••• Liz & Pieter GROENVELD (Lizzy/87) Netherlands Homeschoolers, Stadhuislaan 31, 2131 BG Hoofddorp **(H)** ••• Christopher MAHONEY & Carolyn COHEN (Brian/85, Tara[Fenny]/87) USDA AFHIS IS, American Embassy Hague, PSC 71 Box 1000, APO AE 09715 ••• Donna RICHOUX & Frank ROSS (Norma/87) Bonkelstrat 14, 2131 WT Hoofddorp

New Zealand — Camella ANSELMI & Christopher TURNER (Evan/89, Franc/92) Kaitaringa Rd, RD 1, Te Kuiti, North Island **(H)** ••• Peter & Jill WHITMORE (Tom/75, Ben/77, Anna/88) 3 Thompson Rd, Panmure, Auckland 6 **(H)**

Elsewhere:

Elisabeth ATMER, Karlavagen 111, S-115 26 Stockholm, **Sweden** ••• Harold & Gemma BAER (Harold/90, Amfila/92) Bantatuvan, Bantad, Boac, Marinduque, **Philippines** 4900 **(H)** ••• CauLace & Charles COE (Christopher/84, Amber/86) PO Box 789, Manila, **Philippines** 1099 ••• Elese COIT & Gary SCHILLER (Magali/88) 30 Rue des Mimosas, 1030 Brussels, **Belgium (H)** ••• Patrick & Johanna CURRAN (Emmet/78, Malachy/79, Michael/83) c/o Irish Aid, Box 7791, Kampala, **Uganda (H)** ••• Perry & Gretchen DENNISTON (Lauriel/76, Sky/80, Autumn/84) PSC 450 Box 628, APO AP 96208-0628 **(S. Korea)** ••• Thomas & Karen DROZD (Layla/86, Kaolyn/88, Sage & Aurta/90) Drozd/Tsbm Int'l, Unit 61323 Box R, APO AE 09803-1323 **(Saudi Arabia)** ••• Elisabeth GIANSIRACUSA & John FORRESTER (Eve/91) Via Bondeno 42, 00127 Rome, **Italy** ••• Vella & Dennis GREGOIRE (Simone/79, Camille/81) Via Sant'Anna, 45, 20020 Arese (Milan) **Italy** ••• Elsa HAAS, APRENDER SIN ESCUELA (Spanish GWS), Apartado 28198, Madrid 28080 **Spain** ••• David & Fiona HANCOCK (Laura/83, Graham/86) PO Box 366219, San Juan, **Puerto Rico** 00936 ••• Candis LITSEY & Ted YOUNG (Evan/82, Sarah/85) 1171 Tower 12, Hong Kong Parkview, 88 Tattam Reservoir Rd, **Hong Kong (H)** ••• Karen MAXWELL (Jason/82, Andy/86) 15 Chaussee de Louvain, 1030 Brussels, **Belgium (H)** ••• Joaquim & Flory MONTEIRO (Myola/76, Myron/85) PO Box 7682, Dubai **United Arab Emirates (H)** ••• Robin MOORE & Richard BRYANT (Alex/80, Tegan/88, Nicky/90, Galahad/92) CDR R.A. Bryant, SC, USN, PSC 1203 Box 1041, APO AE 09803-1041 **Saudi Arabia** ••• Bippan NORBERG & Peter SZIL (Lorna/81, Tolm/86) Apdo 45, 03580 L'Alias Del Pi, Alicante, **Spain (H)** ••• Khalid & Terrie RASHEED (Abdullah/83) PO Box 25239, Riyadh, 11466 **(Saudi Arabia) (H)** ••• Aleta & Doug SHEPLER (Kirsten/77, Os/80, Halce/85) POHA Int'l #368 A, PO Box 02-5255, Miami FL 33102 **(Venezuela)** ••• Reed & Chris SIMS (Shannon/87, Paul/89) 414 W Soledad Av #602, Agana, **Guam** 96910 **(H)** ••• William & Marie STIGLIANI (Marisa/82, Claire/83, Emilie/85, Caterina/87, Anthony/90) Ottensteinstrasse 123, Sudstadt A2344 **Austria (H)** ••• Mario & Beaulah TAGUIWALO (Mark/74, Freddie/78, Mike/84) 21 Everlasting Rd, Pilar Village Las Pinas 1750 MM **Philippines** ••• Miranda Mady WELTER & Maurice HAAPE (Nikolas/83, Selina/87, Markandeya/91) House 5, L-8541, Kapweiler, **Luxembourg (H)**

If you are using this Directory and it is after February 1995, remember that addresses (especially of state and local groups) change often. Look in later issues of GWS (#103 on) for additions and changes to the Directory, or, for an updated list of groups, order our Homeschooling List Packet.

Directory of Organizations

Correspondence Schools or Curriculum Suppliers

A Beka Correspondence School/Home Video School/Book Publications, Pensacola FL 32523-9160, 1-800-874-BEKA
Alpha Omega Publications, PO Box 3153, Tempe AZ 85281, 602-438-2717
Alta Vista College Press Home School Curric, PO Box 222, Medina WA 98039, 206-453-7848
American Home Academy Materials, 2770 S 1000 W, Perry UT 84302
American School, 850 E 58th, Chicago IL 60637 (high school)
Associated Christian Schools, PO Box 27115, Indianapolis IN 46227, 317-881-7132
Brigham Young U-Dept of Independent Study, 206 Harman Continuing Ed Bldg, Provo UT 84602
Calvert School, 105 Tuscany Rd, Baltimore MD 21210
Christian Liberty Academy, 502 W Euclid Ave, Arlington Hts IL 60004
Christian Light Publications, PO Box 1126, Harrisonburg VA 22801-1126, 703-434-0768
Classic Curriculum, Dept G, PO Box 656, Milford MI 48042, 313-481-7008 or 1-800-348-6688
Educators Publishing Service, 75 Moulton St, Cambridge MA 02238
Glenn Distributors, 7251 Bass Hwy, St Cloud MN 32769
Hewitt Research Foundation, PO Box 9, Washougal WA 98671, 206-835-8708
Home Study Alternative School, PO Box 10356, Newport Beach CA 92658
Home Study Directory, Nat'l Home Study Council, 1601 18th St NW, Wash DC 20009
Home Study Institute, 6940 Carroll Ave, Takoma Park MD 20912, 202-723-0800
International Institute, PO Box 99, Park Ridge IL 60068
Kolbe Academy, 1600 F St, Napa CA 94559
Laguna Beach Ed'l Books, 245 Grandview, Laguna Beach CA 92651, 714-494-4225
Laurel Spring School, PO Box 1440, Ojai 93024
The Learning Experience Company, PO Box 1457, Bryson City NC 28713, 1-800-367-8532
Living Heritage Academy, PO Box 1438, Lewisville TX 75067
McGuffey Academy, 2213 Spur Trail, Grapevine TX 76051, 817-481-7008
The Moore Foundation, Box 1, Camas WA 98607
National Book Co, 333 SW Park Ave, Portland OR 97205-3784, 503-228-6345
Oak Meadow School, PO Box 712, Blacksburg VA 24063, 703-552-3263
Our Lady of Victory School, 4436 E Alpine Dr, Post Falls ID 83854, 208-773-7265
Phoenix Special Programs, 3132 W Clarendon, Phoenix AZ 85017 (high school)
Rod & Staff Publishers, Crockett KY 41413, 606-522-4348
Seton School Home Study, One Kidd Ln, Front Royal VA 22630-3332, 703-636-9990
SMM Educational Services, Box 1079, Sunland CA 91040, 818-352-2310
Textbooks for Parents, Box 209, Kendrick ID 83537, 208-276-4721
U of Nebraska Independent Study High School, Continuing Ed Ctr Rm 269, Lincoln NE 68583
Weaver Curriculum, 2752 Scarborough, Riverside CA 92503 (Pre K-6th, 7-12th supplements)
For high school, college and grad courses, see PETERSON'S INDEPENDENT STUDY CATALOG, available from Holt Associates, 2269 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge MA 02140 for $16.95 + $4 postage

Helpful Private Schools

Private schools enrolling or helping homeschoolers in various ways (curricula, legal help, support):
Abbott Loop Christian Ctr, 2626 Abbott Rd, Anchorage AK 99507
Abington Academy, 176 Main St, Yarmouthport MA 02675 (Cape Cod only)
Alpha Christian School, Rt 1, Perry KS 66073, 913-597-5822
American Heritage Christian Academy, 9027 Calvine Rd, Sacramento CA 95829, 916-682-2382
Arivaca Community School, PO Box 24, Arivaca AZ 85601
Baldwin Park Christian School, 13940 E Merced, Baldwin Park CA 91706, 916-337-8828
Branford-Grove School, PO Box 341172, Arleta CA 91334, 818-890-0350
Bay Shore School, PO Box 13038, Long Beach CA 90803, 310-434-3940
Cair Paravel Satellite Schools, 913-232-9721 (KS)
Calumet School, RD 1 Box 95, Smyrna NY 13464
Cascade Canyon School, 459-3464 (San Anselmo, CA)
Christian Chapel Schools, 1920 S Brea Cyn Cut-off Rd, Walnut CA 91789, 714-598-9733
Christian Family Educational Services, PO Box 47159, Phoenix-AZ 85068
Clonlara Home Based Education Program, 1289 Jewett St, Ann Arbor MI 48104, 313-769-4515
Cooperative Learning Ctr, 454 Papaya St, Vista CA 92083, 619-726-3020
Dayspring Christian Academy, PO Box 60956, Palo Alto CA 94306
Discovery Christian School, 5547 Alabama Dr, Concord CA 94521, 415-672-5670
G.A.T.E. School, 1725 N Date #43, Mesa AZ 85201, 969-4821
Grassroots Free School, 2458 Grassroots Way, Tallahassee FL 32301, 904-656-3629
High Meadow, 60 Gatehouse RD, New Paltz NY 12561, 914-255-8842
Home-Centered Learning, PO Box 4643, Whittier CA 90607, 310-696-4696
Independence Private School, c/o Principal, M. Black, 45 Albert St North, Orilla, ONT L3V 5K3, Canada
The Learning Community, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia MD 21045, 410-730-0073
The Learning Community, Inc, PO Box 5177, Herndon VA 22070
Little Piney School, Rt 1 Box 20, Newburg MO 65550
Little Red Home School, 9669 E 123rd, Hastings MN 55033, 437-3049
Magic Meadow School, PO Box 29, N San Juan CA 95960
Meter Schools, PO Box 427, Rosharon TX 77583
Morning Glory Private School, PO Box 20, Ft White FL 32028
Mount Vernon Academy, 184 Vine St, Murray UT 84107
Mt Carmel Academy, RD 1 Box 1737, Waterville VT 05492
Muncie Christian School, 230 S 65th, Kansas City MO 66111, 913-788-3018
North Long Beach Calvary Chapel, 132 E Artesia Blvd, Long Beach CA 90805, 213-428-5166
Pilgrim Christian School, 3759 E 57th St, Maywood CA 90270, 213-585-3167
Pilgrim School, 531 N Balna, Porterville CA 93257, 209-782-0402
Pinewood School, 112 Road D, Pine CO 80470, 303-838-4418
Pittsburgh Urban Christian Coal. School, 412-322-8324 (PA)
Rocky Mountain High Academy, PO Box 418, Flora Vista NM 87415

Saddleback Valley Ctr, Box 912, El Toro CA 92630; 714-855-8003
Santa Fe Community School, PO Box 2241, Santa Fe NM 87501; 505-471-6928
Seedling, c/o Joy Retter, 69 Sanderson Crescent, Richmond Hill Ontario L4C 5L5, Canada
Sidney Ledson School, 33 Overland Dr, Don Mills, Ont, Canada M3C 2C3; 416-447-5355
Snohomish County Christian School, 1215 Olympic Ave, Edmonds WA 98020; 206-771-1793
Stonemoor Hills School, 3 Stonemoor Dr, Pueblo CO 81005; 303-561-3510
Summit Christian Academy, 13789 Noel Rd, Suite 100, Dallas TX 75240
Sycamore Tree, 2179 Meyer Pl, Costa Mesa CA 92627; 714-650-4466
TEACH, 4350 Lakeland Ave, N Robbinsdale MN 55422
Upattinas School, 429 Greenridge Rd, Glenmoore PA 19343; 215-458-5138

Homeschooling Organizations

Some of these groups are statewide (look for the state name in the group's title as an indication) and are likely to have information about state laws or regulations, and may have conferences and packets of information for new homeschoolers. Other groups are local support groups that are likely to have meetings and activities. Both state and local groups may have newsletters. Try getting in touch with a state group even if it's far away from where you live; many state groups can refer you to families, or smaller support groups, in your immediate area.

State or Local Groups: (alphabetically by state):

AL Alabama Home Educators, PO Box 16091, Mobile 36116
Alabama Home Educators - Tuscaloosa Area, Rt 3 Box 633, Cottondale 35453
East Lake UMC Academy, 1603 Great Pine Rd, Birmingham 35235 (acts as cover school)
Homeschool Advocates, 5962 Chalet Dr North, Mobile 36608; 205-344-3239
AK Anchorage Home Spun Educators, 7421 Tangle CT, Anchorage 99504-3527
AZ Arizona Home Schoolers, PO Box 30504, Phoenix 85046-0504; 602-992-8056
Bethany Home Educators, 2720 S Flint Cir, Mesa 85202
Home School Supplies, 1125 E Quick Draw Pl, Tucson 85749
Parents Assoc of Christian Home Schools, 6166 W Highland, Phoenix 85033
Phoenix Learning Alternatives Network, 8835 N 47th Pl, Phoenix 85028; 602-483-3381
SPICE, 10414 W Mulberry Dr, Phoenix 85039
AR Arkansas Christian Home Education Assoc, PO Box 501, Little Rock 72203; 501-753-9164
CA Bakersfield Open Support Grp, 805-836-3454
California Coalition - PALS, PO Box 92, Escondido 92025; 619-749-1522
Center for Educational Guidance, PO Box 445, N San Juan 95960; 916-292-3623
Central Coast Homeschoolers, 7600 Marchant Av, Atascadero 93422; 805-462-0726
Children and Community Network, c/o Lynne Knowles, 14556 Little Greenhorn Rd, Grass Valley 95945
Christian Family Schools, PO Box 23068, San Jose 95153-3068
Christian Home Educators of CA, PO Box 28643, Santa Ana 92799-8644; 714-537-5121
Community Education Gazette, PO Box 445, N San Juan 95960
Esparto Homeschoolers, PO Box 305, Esparto 95627; 916-787-3613
Home School Assoc of CA (formerly Northern CA Homeschool Assoc), PO Box 2067, Santa Clara 95055; 408-247-4001
Homeschooling Cooperative of Sacramento, PO box 217, Rio Linda 95673
Mountain View Park Homeschoolers, 6603 Mammoth Av, Van Nuys 91405-4813
North Santa Clara Valley Homeschoolers, 795 Sheraton Dr, Sunnyvale 94087
Peninsula Homeschoolers, 4795 Luge Dr, San Jose 95130; 408-379-6835
Riverside Area Home Learners, c/o Gibson, 13171 Spur Branch Cir, Corona 91719; 909-245-0902
San Diego Home Educators, JoAnn, 619-560-8866
School of Home Learning Support Group, 1904 Flora Vista St, Needles 92363; 619-326-2167
Sonoma County Homeschoolers, 8600 Templeman Rd, Forestville 95436
South Bay F.R.E.E. Scholars, 538 Coe Av, San Jose 95125; 408-294-0630
South St Centre, Box 261, Boulder Creek 95006 (resource ctr for families)
South Valley Homeschoolers Assn, Box 961, San Martin 95046
SPICE, c/o PO Box 282, Wilton 95693
W. San Fernando Valley Playgrp, c/o Brecht, 20555 Dumont St, Woodland Hills 91364; 818-888-2480
Wildflower Homeschoolers, 1557 Vancouver Way, Livermore 94550; 510-455-0465
Yosemite Area Homeschoolers, PO Box 74, Midpines 95345
CO Boulder County Home Educators, 1150 Moorce Dr #D, Boulder 80303; 546-0278 or 581-9605
Colorado Home Educators' Assoc, 303-650-8833
Colorado Home Schooling Network, 7490 W Apache, Sedalia 80135; 303-688-4136
Colorado Springs Homeschoolers, 2906 Marilyn Rd, Colorado Springs 80909; 719-598-8444
Fall River Homeschool, PO Box 3322, Idaho Springs 80452
Home Educators for Excellence of Durango, c/o Haratyc, 11 Animas Pl, Durango 81301; 303-247-2675
Independent Network of Creative Homeschoolers, c/o Woodhouse, 724 Victor St, Aurora 80011; 303-340-3185; 303-751-6421
Northern Colorado Home School Assoc, c/o Trembuck, 2200 Vassar Av, Fort Collins 80525; 303-221-9749
Unschoolers Family Support Grp, 5315 Landgan St, Colorado Spgs 80919
CT Connecticut Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 250, Cobalt 06414; 203-267-4240
Unschoolers' Support, 22 Wildrose Av, Guilford 06437 203-458-7402
DE Tri State Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 7193, Newark 19714-7193
FL ABC Homeschool Cooperative, c/o Joyce Bussell, 1140 NE Town Terr, Jensen Beach 34957; 407-334-2083
Family Learning Exchange, 2020 Turpentine Rd, Mims 32754
Florida Assoc for Schools at Home, 1000 DevI's Dip, Tallahasser 32308; 878-2793
Florida Parent-Educators Assoc, 20051 Quesada Ave, Port Charlotte 33952
Parkland Home Educators, 2111 Oakhurst Av, Winter Park 32792; 407-679-6890; 657-7560
Redlands Christian Home Educators, 9870 Martinique Dr, Cutler Ridge 33189 305-233-2021
GA Atlanta Alternative Education Network, c/o Paymer, 1158 McConnell Dr, Decatur 30033
Cobb County Homeschoolers, 813 Wyntuck Dr, Kennesaw 30144
Free to Learn at Home, 4439 Lake Forest Dr, Oakwood 30566; 404-536-8077
Georgians for Freedom in Education, 209 Cobb St, Palmetto 30268; 404-463-3719
North Side Atlanta Homeschoolers, c/o Jane Kelly, 4141 Wieuca, Atlanta 30342
REACH, c/o Vicki Scott, 617 Colony Ct, Woodstock 30188
HI Christian Homeschoolers of Hawaii, 910824 Oama St, Ewa Beach 96706; 689-6398
Friends Learning at Home, PO Box 3476, Mililani 96789
Hawaii Island Home Educators, 968-8076 or 965-9002
Hawaii Homeschool Assn, 66960 Kuewa Dr, Waialua 96791
Maui Home Educators, 777 Kolani St, Wailuku 96793; 808-242-8225
The Tropical Homeschooler (newsletter), c/o Pinsky, 220 Waipalani Rd, Haiku, Maui 96708; 808-572-9289
IA Iowa Families for Christian Education, RR 3 Box 143, Missouri Valley 51555
Iowa Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 213, Des Moines 50301
ID Home Educators of Idaho, 3618 Pine Hill Dr, Coeur d'Alene 83814; 208-667-2778
Family Unschooling Network, 6913 Ashland Dr, Boise 83709
Idaho Home Educators, PO Box 4022, Boise 83711-4022; 208-482-7336
IL Evanston Home Educators, 9214 Harding Av, Evanston 60203; 708-676-3855
HOUSE, c/o Mary Friedl, 1331 Cleveland, Evanston 60202 (statewide)
Illinois Christian Home Educators, PO Box 261, Zion 60099
IN LEARN, 7633 Shilo Rd, Unionville 47468 (Bloomington area)
Wabash Valley Homeschool Assoc, c/o Palmer, 2515 E Quinn Av, Terre Haute 47805; 812-466-9467
KS Christian Home Educators Confederation of Kansas, PO Box 3564, Shawnee Mission 66203
Hesston/Canton Home Educators Assoc, 316-367-8205
Lawrence Area Unaffiliated Grp of Homeschoolers, c/o Michener, RR 1 Box 496, Perry 66073
Manhattan Parent Educators, 913-539-3641
Teaching Parents Assoc, PO Box 3968, Wichita 67201 316-945-0810
KY Kentucky Home Education Assoc, PO Box 81, Winchester 40392-0081
Kentucky Independent Learners Network, PO Box 275, Somerset 42502
Madison County Homeschool Assoc, 239 Reeves Rd, Richmond 40475
LA Home Educators Network, 59126 Thompson Rd, Slidell 70460
Louisiana Citizens for Home Education, 3404 Van Buren, Baker 70714; 504-775-5472
Southwest Acadiana Homeschoolers, 507 S Arenas, Rayne 70578; 318-334-2812
Wild Azalea Unschoolers, 6055 General Meyer Av, New Orleans 70131 504-392-5647
ME Maine Homeschool Association, PO Box 9715-189, Portland 04104
Peninsula Area Homeschooling Assoc, PO Box 235, Deer Isle 04627
Sebago Lake Homeschoolers Support Grp, RR 2 Box 54, Sebago Lake 04075; 207-642-4368
Southern Maine Home Education Support Network, 76 Beech Ridge Rd, Scarborough 04074; 207-883-9621
MD Maryland Home Education Assoc, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia 21045; 410-730-0073
Montgomery Co Support Group, 26824 Howard Chapel Dr, Damascus 20872-1247; 301-253-5467
North County Home Educators, 303 Royale Dr, Baltimore 21226
Parents for Home Education, 13020 Blairmore St, Beltsville 20705; 301-572-5827
MA Apple Country Homeschooling Assoc, PO Box 246, Harvard 01451; 508-456-8515
Berkshire Homeschoolers Grp, 217 Old State Rd, Berkshire 01224; 413-443-1770
Cape Ann Homeschoolers, 6 Emily Ln, Magnolia 01930
Franklin Co Families for Home Ed, 413-625-6566

Greater Boston Home Educators, 617-246-2059 (Wakefield)
Home Education Resource Ctr, 505 East St, Pittsfield 01201; 413-684-2346
Homeschoolers of Mass. Education Club (Boston area), contact Phoebe Wells, 617-876-7273
Homeschooling Together (Arlington/Belmont area), Ann Lerman 617-489-3275
Kitchen School Group, PO Box 96, W Boxford 01885; 617-352-2023
Mass. Home Learning Assoc, PO Box 1976, Lenox 01240; 413-637-2169
Merrimack Valley Homelearners Grp, c/o Haley, 29 Fiske St, Tewksbury 01876
Metro West Homeschoolers, 25 Carter Dr, Framingham 01701; 508-877-6536
North Shore Support Grp, 508-468-4663 or 508-658-8970
Southeastern Mass. Homeschool Assoc, PO Box 4336, Fall River 02723-0403; 508-672-0248
Worcester Area Homeschooling Organization, 246 May St #2, Worcester 01602; 617-755-9553

MI **Bay City Homeschooling Support Grp**, 517-893-7608
Benzie Home Educators, PO Box 208, Benzonia 49616
Heritage Home Educators, 2122 Houser Rd, Holly 48442
Info. Network for Christian Homes, 4150 Ambrose NE, Grand Rapids 49505
Learning Tree Resource Center, Box 80 B S Superior Rd RR 1, Atlantic Mine 49905; 906-482-6393
Older Homeschoolers' Grp, 9210 Dwight, Detroit 48214; 313-331-8406
Sunnyridge Alternative Learning Ctr, HCO 1 Box 134, Pelkie 49958

MN **Families Nurturing Lifelong Learners**, 2452 Southcrest Av, Maplewood 55119
Fargo-Moorehead Homeschool Assoc, 1909 8th St S, Moorehead 56560
Home-Based Educators Accrediting Assoc, Rt 1 Box 381, Cambridge 55008
Minnesota Homeschool Alliance, PO Box 23072, Richfield 55423; 612-491-2828
Minnesota Home School Network, 9669 E 123rd, Hastings 55033; 612-437-3049
South Metro Families for Home Education, 17020 Hamilton Dr, Lakeville 55044

MS **Home Educators of Central Mississippi**, c/o McDonald, 109 W Willow Ct, Ridgeland 39157; 601-366-9218

MO **Families for Home Education**, 4400 Woods Rd, Sibley 64088
Kansas City Homeschoolers & Unschoolers, 4112 Genesee, Kansas City 64111; 816-931-7089
Ozark LORE Society, c/o Eisenmann, HC 73 Box 160, Drury 65638; 417-679-3391 (Ozark area grp)
Springfield Area Homeschoolers, Rt 1 Box 193, Fair Grove 65648
St. Louis Homeschooling Network, c/o Steinbart, 2612 Towne Oak Dr, St Louis 63129

MT **Flathead Valley Homeschoolers Assn**, Kalispell, 892-4052, 755-2036
The Grapevine (Montana Homeschool News), 1702 Hwy 83 North, Seeley Lake 59868; 406-754-2481
Homeschoolers of Montana, PO Box 654, Helena 59624-0654
Montana Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 95, UIM, MT 59485-0095

NE **LEARN**, 7741 E Avon Ln, Lincoln 68505; 402-488-7741
Nebraska Indep. Homeschoolers Network, 8010 Lillibridge St, Lincoln 68506
Omaha Project for Education and Nurturing, 7930 Raven Oaks Dr, Omaha 68152
OPEN, 7930 Raven Oaks Dr, Omaha 68152; 402-572-8515
Prairie Christian Home Schools, Rt 3 Box 73, Ord 68862

NV **Home Schools United/Vegas Valley**, PO Box 26811, Las Vegas 89126; 702-870-9566
Parent Activists Committed to Education, PO Box 13587, Las Vegas 89112; 702-457-1509

NH **New Hampshire Alliance for Home Education**, 16 Winter Circle, Manchester 03103
New Hampshire Home School Coalition, PO Box 2224, Concord 03302
New Hampshire Home Schools Newsletter, PO Box 97, Center Tuftonboro 03816
Support Alternative Family Education, PO Box 15, Plaistow 03865; 603-382-3839

NJ **Families Learning Together**, 11 Bates Rd, Jackson 08527; 201-367-5012
Homeschoolers of South Jersey, Rt 2 Burnt House Rd, Vincentown 08088
Jersey Shore Christian Homeschoolers Assoc, 65 Middlesex Rd, Matawan 07747-3030
NJ Family Schools Assoc, RD 3 Box 208, Washington 07882
North Jersey Home Schoolers Assoc, 44 Oak St, Hillsdale 07642, 201-666-6025
Roots and Wings, RD 4 Box 126E, Boonton Twp 07005
Sussex County Home Education Organization, 875-6178
The Tutor, 1239 Whitaker Av, Millville 08332; 609-825-4770
Unschoolers Network, 2 Smith St, Farmingdale 07727; 908-938-2473 (statewide)
Unschooling Fams. Support Grp of Central NJ, RD 1 Box 713, Jobston 08041; 609-723-1524

NM **Glorieta Family Educators**, Star Rt 1 Box 404, Glorieta 87535
New Mexico Family Educators, PO Box 92276, Albuquerque 87199-2276
NM Christian Home Education, 7417 Santa Fe Trail NW, Albuquerque 87120
Santa Fe Learning Cooperative, 2463 Camino Capitan, Santa Fe, 87505

NY **Albany Area Homeschoolers**, 46 Pershing Dr, Scotia 12302; 518-346-3413
Families for Home Education, 3219 Coulter Rd, Cazenovia 13035
Fingerlakes Unschoolers Network, 249 Coddington Rd, Ithaca 14850; 607-277-6300
Home Education Exchange of the Southern Tier, 13 Woodland Av, Binghamton 13903; 607-722-8269
Homeschoolers Network of the Mid-Hudson Valley, RD 2 Box 211P, Ski Run Rd, Bloomingburg NY 12721; 914-733-1002
Long Island Homeschoolers Assoc, 4 Seville Pl, Massapequa Park 11762; 516-795-5554
Loving Education At Home, PO Box 332, Syracuse 13205-0332; 518-337-6019
New York City Home Educators Alliance, c/o Theresa Morris, 341 E 5th St, New York 10003; 212-505-9884
NY State Home Education News, PO Box 59, E Chatham 12060; 518-392-6900 (legal news)
Rochester Area Homeschoolers Assoc, 275 Yarmouth Rd, Rochester 14610; 716-271-0845
Tri-County Homeschoolers, 130 Blanchard Rd, Stoneypoint 10980; 914-429-5156

NC **Families Learning Together**, 1724 Azalea Dr, Wilmington 28405 (also statewide)
The Home Education Association, 300 Brown Cir, Rolesville 27571; 919-554-1563
North Carolinians for Home Education, 419 N Boylan Av, Raleigh 27603-1211; 919-834-NCHE

ND **North Dakota Home School Assoc**, PO Box 486, Mandan 58554; 701-223-4080

OH **Christian Home Educators of Ohio**, PO Box 1224, Kent 44240
Christian Parents Assoc, 310 Bluebonnet Dr, Findlay 45840 (local only)
Growing Together, c/o Nancy McKibben 1676 Trendril Ct, Columbus 43229
Home-Based Education League of Parents, see National/General Group. Also has Ohio info.
Home School Network of Greater Cincinnati, 642 Romohr Acres, Cincinnati 45244, 732-6355
Home School Resource Ctr, 1444 Gurley Ave, Akron 44310; 216-633-3160
Ohio Home Educators Network, PO Box 23054, Chagrin Falls 44023-0054; 216-543-5644

OK **Cornerstone**, 1148 S Owasso Av, Tulsa 74120
Learning All Ways, 7 Canyon Oaks Dr, McLoud 74851; 405-388-5979
OK Central Home Educators Consociation, PO Box 270601, OKC 73137
Oklahoma Christian Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 471032, Tulsa 74147-1032

OR **Avalos Learning Center**, PO Box 70778, Eugene 97401
Douglas County Homeschoolers Connection, 4053 Hanna St, Roseburg 97470
Homeschoolers of Lane County, 38040 Pengra Rd, Fall Creek 97438; 503-937-2271
Homeschool Political Action Committee and **Homeschool Chautauqua**, 5360 SW 192 Av, Aloha 97007; 503-649-1110
The Learning Connection, PO Box 1091 #196, Grants Pass 97526; 503-476-5686
Mid-Valley Secular Homeschoolers (Salem area), 503-362-1203
Oregon Home Education Network, 4470 SW Hall Blvd #286, Beaverton 97005; 503-321-5166
Parents Education Assoc, PO Box 1482, Beaverton 97075; 503-645-3709
Portland Area Tri-County Homeschoolers, PO Box 82415, Portland 97282; 503-357-5306
Willamette Homeschoolers, 245 W 27th Av, Eugene 97405

PA **Chester County Homeschoolers**, PO Box C, Paoli 19301
Diversity - United in Homeschooling, 920 Wood St, Bristol 19007; 215-788-3837
Endless Mountains Homeschoolers (N Central PA), c/o Kellogg, RD 3 Box 80, Columbia Cross Rds 16914; 717-549-8179
Pennsylvania Home Education Network, 285 Allegheny St, Meadville 16335; 412-265-2734
Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, RD 2 Box 117, Kittanning 16201; 412-783-6512

RI **Parent Educators of RI**, PO Box 782, Glendale 02826
Rhode Island Guild of Home Teachers (Home Spun News), Box 11, Hope RI 02831 (Inquiry Packet $1); 401-821-1546
Rhode Islanders for Constitutional Education, 1 Solar St, Providence 02903; 401-861-9685

SC **Carolina SuperSchoolers**, 777 Hillview St, Spartanburg 29302
South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools, PO Box 2104, Irmo 29063
South Carolina Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 612, Lexington 28071-0612; 803-951-8960

SD **South Dakota Home School Assoc**, PO Box 882, Sioux Falls 57101

TN **Home Education Assoc of Tenn** (HEAT), 3677 Richbriar Ct, Nashville 37211
Homeschooling Families, 214 Park Ln, Oliver Springs 37840 (also statewide)

TX **Austin Area Homeschoolers**, 6502 Bradley Dr, Austin 78723
Family Home Educators of Dallas, 214-840-8342
Home-Oriented Private Education for Texas, PO Box 43887, Austin 78745-0018; 512-280-4673
Houston Alternative Education Alliance, 12811 Ivy Forest Dr, Cypress 77429
Metroplex Middle of the Road (Home) Educators, 1702 S Hwy 121, Suite 607-110, Lewisville 75067; 214-724-1026
North Texas Self-Schoolers, c/o Jordan, 150 Forest Ln, Double Oak/Lewisville 75067; 817-430-4835
Texas Homeschool Coalition, 806-797-4927

UT **FCLA Utah Spice Group**, 1510 W 500 N, Provo 84601; 801-377-4728
Utah Home Education Association, PO Box 50565, Provo 84605-0565; 801-535-1533 or 342-4027

VT **Christian Home Educators of VT**, 802-476-992
Life is Valuable Education, RR 2 Box 289B, St Albans 05478; 802-527-1674

277

Vermont Homeschoolers Assoc, 179 Spruce Knob, Middletown Spgs 05757; 802-235-2457

VA Blue Ridge Area Network for Congenial Homeschoolers (BRANCH), Rt 3 Box 602, Afton 22920; 703-456-9822
Community of Independent Learners, PO Box 16029, Alexandria 22302; 703-998-9626
Home Educators Assoc of VA, PO Box 1810, Front Royal 22630-1810; 703-635-9322
Home Educators Network, 3320 Waverly Dr, Fredericksburg 22401
Home Instruction Support Group, 217 Willow Terr, Sterling 22170
Lifespan Educational & Resource Network (LEARN), 2520 Rocky Branch Rd, Vienna 22181; 703-281-9049
Richmond Educational Alternatives for Children at Home, 3403 Hawthorne Av, Richmond 23222

WA Clark Co. Home Educators, 28823 NW Main St, Ridgefield 98642; 206-887-3042
Families Learning Together, Box 10 Tiger Star Rt, Colville 99114
Family Academy, 146 SW 153rd #290, Seattle 98166
Family Learning Organization, PO Box 7247, Spokane 99207; 509-467-2552 (also statewide)
Homeschoolers' Support Assoc, PO Box 413, Maple Valley 98038; 206-432-9805
Palouse Home Laarning Alternatives, SE 405 Hill, Pullman 99163
Rainbow Way Playgroup, 5004 20th Av NW, Seattle 98107; 206-782-3071
Seattle Homeschool Grp, 11706 36th Av NE, Seattle 98125; 206-670-8079
Teaching Parents Assoc, 16427 28th Dr SE, Bothell 98012; 206-483-6642
Washington Homeschool Organization, 18130 Midvale Av N, Seattle 98133; 206-546-9483; 206-298-8942
Whatcom Homeschool Assoc, 595 Trout Lake Rd, Bellingham 98226

WV Alternatives in Education, Rt 3 Box 305, Chloe 25235; 304-655-7232
Christian Home Educators of West VA, PO Box 266, Glenville 26351; 304-462-8296
West VA Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 3707, Charleston 25337-3707; 304-733-4735

WI Families in Schools at Home (FISH), 4639 Conestoga Trail, Cottage Grove 53527
HOME (Madison Chapter), 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison 53705; 608-238-3302
Unschooling Families, 1908 N Clark St, Appleton 54911; 414-735-9832
Wisconsin Parents Assoc, PO Box 2502, Madison 53701

WY Unschoolers of Wyoming, 429 Hwy 230, #20, Laramie 82070

National or General Homeschool Groups:

Alternative Education Sources, PO Box 172, Unionville IN 47468
Basic Education, PO Box 610589, D/FW Airport TX 75261; 214-462-1909
Catholic Home School Newsletter, 688 11th Ave NW, New Brighton MN 55112
Christian Life Workshops, 180 SE Kane Ave, Gresham OR 97030
The Drinking Gourd (homeschoolers of color), PO Box 2557, Redmond WA 98073
Family Centered Learning Alternatives, HCR 63 Box 713, Naselle WA 98638; 206-484-3252
Holt Associates/Growing Without Schooling, 2269 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge MA 02140; 617-864-3100
Home-Based Education League of Parents, Suite 131, 3208 Cahuenga Blvd West, Los Angeles CA 90068; 1-800-582-9061
Home Education Press, PO Box 1083, Tonasket WA 98855; 509-486-1351
Home Educators Computer Users Group, 26824 Howard Chapel Dr, Damascus MD 20872-1247; 301-253-5467
Home School Legal Defense Assoc, PO Box 159, Paeonian Springs VA 22129; 703-338-5600
Home School Researcher, Western Baptist College, 5000 Deer Park Dr SE, Salem OR 97301-9392
Homeschool Associates of New England, 116 Third Av, Auburn ME 04210; 207-777-0077
Homeschoolers for Peace, PO Box 74, Midpines CA 95345
Homeschoolers Travel Network, NHA, PO Box 290, Hartland MI 48353-0290; 513-772-9580
Islamic Homeschool Assoc of North America, 1312 Plymouth Ct, Raleigh NC 27610
Jewish Home Ed's Newsletter, c/o Ernstoff, 2 Webb Rd, Sharon MA 02067
Nat'l Assoc of Catholic Home Educators, PO Box 420225, San Diego CA 92142
Nat'l Assoc of Mormon Home Educators, 2770 S 1000 West, Perry UT 84302
Nat'l Center for Home Education, PO Box 200, Paeonian Spgs VA 22129; 703-338-7600
Nat'l Challenged Homeschoolers Assoc, 5383 Alpine Rd SE, Olalla WA 98359; 206-857-4257
Nat'l Home Education Research Institute, Western Baptist College, 5000 Deer Park Dr SE, Salem OR 97301-9392
Nat'l Homeschool Association, PO Box 157290, Cincinnati OH 45215-7290; 513-772-9580
Nat'l Homeschool Service, PO Box 167, Rodeo NM 88056; 505-557-2250
PRAIRIE (Bulletin on Parental Rights and Responsibilities in Education), 2545 Koshkonong Rd, Stoughton WI 53589-2720
Simon of Cyrene Assoc (African-American Homeschoolers of Christian Faith, PO Box 26357, Rochester NY 14626
SPECIAL (single parent homeschoolers), 2 Pineview Dr, Amelia OH 45102
The Teaching Home, PO Box 202-9, Portland OR 97220-0219

Homeschool Groups Outside of U.S.

Canada:

Alberta Home Education Assoc, c/o Anne Stasiewich, Box 3451, Leduc AB T9E 6M2
Calgary Home Eds Encouragement & Resource Society, RR 6, Calgary AB T2M 4L5
Canadian Alliance of Homeschoolers, RR 1, St George, Ontario N0E 1N0
Canadian Home Educators Assoc of BC, 4684 Darin Ct, Kelowna BC V1W 2B3; 604-764-7462
Cowichan Valley Homelearners Support Grp, RR 7, Duncan BC V9L 4W4
Cowichan Valley Christian Homelearners Support Grp, 1050 Marchmont Rd, Duncan BC V9L 2M7
Education Advisory, 2267 Kings Ave, W Vancouver BC V7V 2C1
Gabriola Homeschoolers, PO Box 223, Gabriola Island BC V0R 1X0
Greater Vancouver Home Learners Support Grp, 604-228-1939; 604-298-6710
Home Education News, Box 39009 Pt Grey RPO, Vancouver BC V6R 4P1
Home Learning Resource Centre, Box 61, Quathiaski BC V0P 1N0
Homeschoolers Assoc of Northern Alberta, 6311 14 Av, Edmonton T6L 1Y1
Manitoba Assoc for Schooling at Home, 89 Edkar Cres, Winnipeg R2G 3H8
Montreal Homeschoolers' Support Grp, 5241 Jacques Grenier, Montreal PQ H3W 2G8
New Bruns. Assoc of Christian Homeschoolers, RR 1 Site 11 Box 1, Hillsborough NB E0A 1X0; 506-734-2863
Nova Scotia Support Grp, c/o Laura Uhlman RR 1, Pleasantville NS B0R 1G0
Ontario Homeschoolers, Box 19, Gilford, Ont. L0L 1R0; 705-456-3186
Orilla Homeschoolers' Support Grp, 45 Albert St North, Orilla Ont L3V 5K3
Quebec Homeschooling Advisory, CP 1278, 1002 Rosemarie, Val D'Id J0T 2N0
Rideau Valley Home Educators Assoc, c/o Dubuc, 1144 Byron Av, Ottawa K2B 6T4; 613-729-0117
Saskatchewan Home-Based Educators, 116A Idylwyld Dr. N, suite 13, Saskatoon SK S7L 0Y7
Victoria Home Learning Network, 106-290 Regina, Victoria, BC V8Z 6S6
Yukon Home Educators' Society, 8 Normandy Rd, Whitehorse YT Y1A 3C5

Elsewhere:

Accelerated Christian Education, PO Box 10, Strathpine, Qld., Australia; 07-205-7503
Alternative Education Resource Group, 39 William St, Hawthorne, Victoria, 3122, Melbourne, Australia
Aprender Sin Escuela, Apartado 28198, Madrid 28080, Spain
Brisbane Homeschooling Group, Lot 2, Caboolture River Rd, Upper Caboolture 4510 Australia
Canberra Home Education Network, 23 Bardolph St, Bonython, ACT 2905, Australia
Education Otherwise, 36 Kinross St, Leamington Spa, Warks, UK CV32 7EF; (0926) 886828
Homeschoolers Australia Pty Ltd, PO Box 420, Kellyville 2153, NSW Australia
Les Enfants D'Abord, 18 Grde Rue, Valence 26000, France
Netherlands Homeschoolers, Raadhuislaan 31, 2131 BG Hoofddoorp, The Netherlands
NSW Central Coast Homeschool Grp, RMB 6346, MacDonalds Rd, Lisarow NSW 2250, Australia
The New Zealand Home Schooling Assoc, 5 Thanet Av, Mt Albert, Auckland, New Zealand
Panama Support Group, PSC Box 1578, APO Miami, Florida 34001 (Ft Amador, Panama)
Puerto Rico Homeschooling Assoc, 503 Barbe St, Santurce 00912 Puerto Rico
Sunshine Coast Homeschooling Grp, #40 Browns Rd, Belli Park via Edmundi, 4562 Queensland, Australia
World-Wide Educational Service, Strode House, 44/50 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3NN England
Yarra Valley Homeschoolers, 9 Salisbury St, Warburton, Australia

Other Organizations:

These educational, child-raising, or self-reliance organizations are good sources of help and allies. Again, a SASE is appreciated.

Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education, PO Box 59, E Chatham NY 12060-0059; 518-392-6900
Alternative Education Resource Organization, 417 Roslyn Rd, Roslyn Hghts NY 11577; 516-621-2195
EVAN-G, 977 Keeler Ave, Berkeley CA 94708 (corporal punishment)
La Leche League International, 9616 Minneapolis Av, Franklin Park IL 60131
Liedloff Continuum Network, White Elephant, 6 Issaquah, Waldo Pt. Harbor, Sausalito CA 94965; 415-332-1570 (people interested in the Continuum Concept)
Nat'l Assoc for the Legal Support of Alt. Schools, PO Box 2823, Santa Fe NM 87501; 505-471-6928
National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest), 342 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139; 617-864-4810
Nat'l Coalition Of Alt. Community Schools, PO Box 15036, Santa Fe NM 87506; 505-474-4312

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Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. ••• Andrea LAIN (14) 1525 Old House Rd, Pasadena CA 91107; sports, reading, animals ••• Heather OLIVIA (14) 1223 Sand Creek Rd, San Dimas CA 91773; unicorns, pogs, guys ••• MECIONIS, 501 E Helena St, Broken Arrow OK 74012; Sarah (10) gymnastics, reading, animals; Amanda (7) animals, art, Barbies; Ricky (4) biking, hamsters, reading ••• Kelly CRISCUOLO (7) 6709 Sunset Rd, Spotsylvania VA 22553; clay, reading ••• Adrian WRIGHT-FITZGERALD (7) RR 1 Box 124A, Stillwater PA 17878; art, music, animals ••• CAIN, 4323 Skycrest Dr NW, Canton OH 44718: Brian (7) animals, legos, traveling; Sarah (4) flowers, dance, Native Americans ••• Audra MYERS (10) Rt 5 Box 270K, Louisville MS 39339; horses, gymnastics, reading ••• BERG, 216 Hawksbrow Mews NW, Calgary, Alberta T3G 3B6, Canada: Suzanne (8) skating, astronomy, horses; Heather (8) skating, dinosaurs, horses ••• Bibi DEITZ (10) 300 E 4th St, Apt 4D, New York NY 10009; reading, letters, modern dance ••• Shad SWANSON (12) RR 2 Box 80, Essex IA 51638; reading, writing, history ••• Tim MESSICK (9) Rt 1 Box 273, Laurel DE 19956; soccer, computers, GI Joe ••• Elena SPUHLER (8) 9 Autumn Dr, E Northport NY 11731; horses, ballet, soccer ••• Ben LESTER (8) PO Box 203, Joshua Tree CA 92252; karate, swords, Power Rangers ••• Sophia QUINN, 35 Brittany Cres, Unionville, Ont. L3R 0R2, Canada; pottery, poetry, science ••• HENSON, Rt 1 Box 151A, Spiro OK 74959: Jeremy (16) bird watching, painting, nature; Rachel (13) reading, skating, music; Joshua (11) bird watching, painting, karate; Bethany (4) gymnastics, legos, dolls

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN HOMESCHOOLERS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH write for support network information: Simon of Cyrene Productions, PO Box 26357, Rochester NY 14626. Send SASE.

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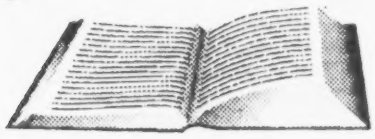
Latter-day Saint Home Educators' Association - support group for "Mormons." 2770 S 1000 West, Perry UT 84302.

Add excitement to reading/writing lessons. A personal letter from our country family for your child to find in the mail every month! Each letter includes: friendly personal responses to your child's letters, another of our family stories, and a new issue stamp on the envelope. Birthdays are special to us! Grandma's Cabin, PO BOx 3, Wedron, IL 60557. $12 a year.

OLDER HOMESCHOOLERS' GROUP. Non-sectarian, serving teens aged approx. 12-18 in **SE Michigan**, No. Ohio, & Windsor, Ont. Educational and social opportunities. 313-331-8406. Emily Linn.

Book Reviews



Earthsearch: A Kids' Geography Museum in a Book

by John Cassidy #3202 $19.95 + $4.50 s/h

When my 5-year-old nephew visited the very traditional Natural History museum in London, which his parents had told him was a place kids love, his disappointed reaction to the passive visual set-up was to ask, "Is museum just looking at things?"

Earthsearch, like other good modern museums, is about doing things. It presents activities that result in learning and, even more than that, presents the idea that doing, rather than just looking, is a great way to learn about the world. *Earthsearch* is written by John Cassidy, who also did the very successful science museum in a book, *Explorabook*. Cassidy uses the same format here, delving into many branches of geography: geology, ecology, demography, maps, and the solar system. In addition to engaging explanations, diagrams, illustrations, photos, and maps, there are eighteen hands-on exhibits and things to do, with clear directions and a vigorous tone that conveys that the world is an intriguing place to learn about.

The book is durable and spiral bound with an aluminum cover to take the tough use and messy situations for which it is intended. Like most Klutz Press books, it includes extra items, like coins from around the world, which enhance the text. It's an attractive, great gift that the publishers recommend for ages 9 and up. I think many homeschooling families could use it with younger children, too.

— Maureen Carey

Mark-it Maps

U.S. #3208 $8.95 + $3.50 s/h
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After years of searching, we have found reusable outline maps of the U.S. and the world that are excellent for children's use. If treated properly, the 23 x 35" laminated maps can be used many times for any number of geographical activities and games.

The maps can be used for obvious activities like naming the places, drawing and naming geographical features, significant structures, and products in their location. They also allow scope for children to be creative – because the maps are blank within the outlines, they invite decoration and the making up of games about the location of things. Families could use them to relate geography to other subjects, by, for example, locating events in music or literature or dance. The maps also have a blank reverse side that kids love to draw on. — Maureen Carey

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Imagine that I am traveling into the future in a time capsule, and that I come to rest, five hundred years from now, in an intelligent, humane, and life-enhancing civilization. One of the people who lives there comes to meet me, to guide me, and to explain his society. At some point, after he has shown me where people live, work, play, I ask him,

"But where are your schools?"

"Schools? What are schools?" he replies.

"Schools are places where people go to learn things."

"I do not understand," he says. "People learn things everywhere, in all places."

"I know that," I say, "But a school is a special place where there are special people who teach you things, help you learn things."

"I am sorry, but I still do not understand. Everyone helps other people learn things. Anyone who knows something or can do something can help someone else who wants to learn more about it. Why should there be special people to do this?"

And try as I will, I cannot make clear to him why we think that education should be, must be, separate from the rest of life.

John Holt in *Freedom and Beyond*

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